Men-at-Arms

OSPREY PUBLISHING

Napoleon's Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard

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First published in Great Britain in 2007 by Osprey Publishing
Midland House, West Way, Botley, Oxford OX2 0PH, UK
443 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016, USA
E-mail: **info@ospreypublishing.com**

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 84603 256 1

Editor: Martin Windrow
Page layouts by Alan Hamp
Typeset in Helvetica Neue and ITC New Baskerville
Index by David Worthington
Originated by PPS Grasmere, Leeds, UK
Printed in China through World Print Ltd.

07 08 09 10 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Buy online at www.ospreypublishing.com

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TITLE PAGE **Charge of the Polish Light Horse of the Imperial Guard in Spain, 1808, by Edouard Detaille. The artist, a collector and authority on Napoleonic uniforms, rendered the full dress of the regiment accurately – the aiguillettes are correctly placed on the right shoulder at this date, and the Polish-style waist sash ends in flounders. Note the crowned 'N' in the front corner of the shabraque and the crowned Imperial eagle in the rear corner. The officer brandishes a captured regimental flag.**

NAPOLEON'S POLISH LANCERS OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD

1807: ORIGINS OF THE POLISH CAMPAIGN

Baron Pierre d'Autancourt (also written Dautancourt), born on 28 February 1771, at first made his career in the Gendarmerie. As a squadron leader of the Gendarmerie d'élite de la Garde Impériale, he was commissioned major in the new regiment of Chevau-Légers Polonais in 1807, and since Col Krasinski spent more of his time as a courtier than a regimental officer ColMaj Dautancourt may be considered as the true commanding officer. It was he who organized the regiment, and he who accompanied it on campaign. During the 1814 campaign in France he became the commander of the 2nd Guard Cavalry Brigade, and during the Hundred Days he returned to the Gendarmerie d'élite. Dautancourt died on 2 January 1832.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1806, after a brief pause in hostilities, it became clear that the fragile peace in continental Europe could not last for long. The previous year, in April 1805, the Third Coalition had been formed to fight Napoleon's expansionist French Empire; this alliance had comprised Britain, Austria, Russia, Sweden and some minor German states, but Prussia still stood aloof and neutral. However, on 3 November, as war already raged in Austria and in Italy, King Frederick William III of Prussia at last agreed to co-operate with the Allied powers. Under the terms of this secret Treaty of Potsdam with Tsar Alexander I of Russia, Prussia undertook to demand from France, as the price of continuing peace, terms based on the 1801 Treaty of Luneville between France and Austria; if these were refused (as they would be), Prussia would join the Third Coalition with an army of 180,000 men.

Just a month later, before Prussia could open negotiations with France, Napoleon's crushing victory over the combined Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz on 2 December 1805 destroyed the Third Coalition and rendered this agreement null. It was 14 December before Napoleon received the Prussian envoy, Count Haugwitz; the Emperor was well aware of the secret negotiations with Russia, and the embarrassed Haugwitz could do nothing but congratulate Napoleon on his victory. Napoleon presented Prussia with his own terms, which were impossibly harsh: to join France in alliance against Britain, and to hand over her territories in western and southern Germany to France and her ally Bavaria.

One of the results of Austerlitz was the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire, of which the Austrian monarch was also the sovereign. In July 1806 the south German states, freed from Austrian political and military supremacy, united into the Confederation of the Rhine, passing into Napoleon's camp; some rulers bound themselves even more closely into this relationship by marrying into Bonaparte's dynasty. This shift in the balance of power, confronting Prussia with French-allied Bavaria and with this new Rheinbund, made King Frederick William's response inevitable, and in October 1806 Prussia mobilized against France as a member of the Fourth Coalition alongside Britain, Russia and Saxony.

By the end of summer 1806, Prussia had concentrated 200,000 troops ready to march towards the Rhine. The Prussian army had never yet faced Napoleon's Grande Armée in battle, and Frederick the Great's heirs still believed themselves invincible.

With Prussian mobilization, Napoleon's Eagles – now based in Bavaria to supervise the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine – had to march eastwards for the second time in a year. Their invasion of Prussia on 8 October was so rapid that the inflexible and slow-moving Prussian armies were taken by surprise; within four days Marshal Lannes had defeated and killed Prince Louis Ferdinand at Saalfeld and Napoleon was threatening Berlin. The twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt, both fought on 14 October, destroyed Prussia's field army and forced her onto the defensive. Berlin, Magdeburg and Stettin fell into French hands; cities capitulated in the face of handfuls of French hussars, and soon the surviving Prussian troops were driven back into East Prussia and the territories of former Poland, hoping for the protection of the advancing Russian army.

Marching into what had been Poland, the French entered Poznan on 4 November, and Warsaw on 27 November; there Marshal Murat, clad in a lavish Polish-style uniform, was welcomed at the head of his troops like a liberator. By now Napoleon considered the campaign against Prussia to be over, and the French retired into winter quarters. The only major force still opposing him were Gen Levin Bennigsen's Russians; and a rapid strike mounted by Bennigsen from the Baltic coast in January 1807 forced Napoleon to react in what would become known as the 'Polish campaign'.

Prince Jozef Anton Poniatowski was born in Vienna on 7 May 1763, the son of Andrzej Poniatowski, brother of the last King of Poland and a field-marshal in Austrian service. Trained for military service from childhood, he distinguished himself in action against the Turks in 1788, and was seriously wounded. He transferred to the Polish army at the age of 26 in 1792, but after the destruction of the Polish state he returned to private life. Following Napoleon's victory at Jena and Prussia's evacuation of her Polish provinces, in November 1806 Poniatowski was asked by the Prussian king to assume the governorship of Warsaw. The French entered the capital a few weeks later, and Poniatowski became 'chief of the military force' on behalf of the French. On 14 January 1807, by Imperial decree, Poniatowski became Director of the Department of War, and set about reorganizing the Polish army. In July 1807 he became War Minister of the newly created Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and Commander-in-Chief in March 1809. The high point of his career may have been the Austro-Polish campaign of that year, when Austria lost most of her former Polish territory. In 1812 he became commander of part of V Corps of the Grande Armée, seeing action at Smolensk, Borodino and Chirikovo; at Vinkovo on 18 October, Poniatowski saved Murat from complete defeat. Rearguarding the retreat of the Grande Armée, Poniatowski was badly injured at Viazma on 29 October; he finally returned to Warsaw on 12 December. After rebuilding the Polish army, in 1813 he commanded VIII Corps; and on 16 October – during the battle of Leipzig – Poniatowski was made a marshal of France and entrusted with covering the French retreat. He lost half his corps defending the city, and the French blew the bridge over the Weisse Elster river before he could reach it. Despite four fresh wounds Poniatowski refused to surrender, and drowned while trying to swim his horse across the river.

Count Vincent Corvin Krasinski (1782–1858), born at Boremi, was the son of a wealthy Polish nobleman. He began his military career in 1791 in the Polish national cavalry, becoming a lieutenant in 1793. After the partitions of Poland he became an enthusiastic supporter of Napoleon, and when the French entered his occupied homeland he raised a cavalry squadron at his own expense. He became the commander of the 1er Chevau-Légers Lanciers de la Garde Impériale in April 1807; a brigade general in 1811; Chamberlain to the Emperor with the Imperial Headquarters in Russia in 1812; and a divisional general in 1813. He took part in many campaigns, fighting at Wagram in 1809, in Russia in 1812, Saxony in 1813 and France in 1814. After Napoleon's first abdication in 1814 he commanded the Polish corps returning home to enter Russian service; he remained loyal to the Tsar, even becoming governor or viceroy of the Polish Congress Kingdom in 1855–56, before his death in November 1858.

As a senior officer he wears here the officer's special full parade uniform, permitted for all officers from April 1807 but seen only on exceptional occasions. It featured a white *kurtka* with crimson facings, tight-fitting crimson trousers, and all silver metal and lace. The special waist sash had tasselled ends, and the saddle cover on the crimson shabraque was made of imitation pantherskin. (Drawing by Job)

Polish forces in exile

In the late 14th century, Queen Jadwiga had married the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Wladyslaw Jagiello, and his dynasty would rule over Poland until 1572. The 16th century was Poland's 'golden age'; but with the end of the Jagiellonian dynasty an elective monarchy took over the throne, causing constant internal rivalries and a fatal weakening. Soon Poland fell prey to its powerful neighbours Russia, Prussia and Austria, and in 1772 it had to hand over nearly a quarter of its territory to these powers in the so-called First Partition.

In May 1791 the Polish king, Stanislas II Poniatowski, agreed to reign as a hereditary constitutional monarch, introducing a more modern form of government. Conservative Polish dissenters appealed to Russia. The autocratic Catherine the Great saw this liberalizing progress as an infectious threat; Poland's small army of 46,000 men, led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko[1] and Prince Jozef Poniatowski (the king's nephew), held off an invading Russian army for three months, but then the king and some politicians capitulated. Russia restored the old system, and divided large areas of Polish territory between themselves and Poland's faithless former ally Prussia, reducing the country to about one-third its former size in the Second Partition. This dismemberment provoked the popular revolt led by Kosciuszko in spring 1794. Against great odds the patriots achieved some victories, liberating Warsaw and Vilna, but by November large Russian and Prussian armies had crushed the rebellion.

1 Tadeusz Andrzej Bonawentura Kosciuszko (1746–1817). A volunteer in American service in the Revolutionary War 1776–83, he rose to chief of engineers in the southern army in 1780 and made a great contribution to American fortress warfare, being promoted brigadier-general by a grateful Congress in 1783. A Polish major-general from 1789, he led a division against the Russians in 1792, and resigned his commission after resistance collapsed. He organized and led rebels in 1794 around Krakow, and later defended Warsaw; wounded and captured at Maciejowice on 10 October, he was held prisoner until 1796. He distrusted Napoleon, and spent the rest of his life in retirement, a greatly respected figure on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 1796 the Third Partition saw the final destruction of the Polish state, which was wiped from the maps of Europe. Amid mass emigration many of Kosciuszko's supporters fled to Revolutionary France, hoping to find asylum and even to fight in the French army against the European monarchies ranged against the Revolution.

Meanwhile, the divided remnants of the Polish army had been forced to serve in the armies of Austria, Prussia and Russia. In November 1792 a French army defeated an Austrian-Piedmontese army at Sospello; they captured not only Austrians, but also hundreds of former Polish soldiers, and each victory over the Austrians would bring more Polish prisoners of war or deserters to serve the Republic.

One of the Polish officers who had followed Kosciuszko into exile in France was Gen J.H.Dombrowski (1755–1818), who organized a brigade-size Polish Legion from exiles, volunteers, prisoners of war and deserters; the organization and titles of this ever-growing Polish force would evolve over time. The major problem was that the French Republic did not allow foreign troops within their ranks; so the Polish Legion approached Gen Bonaparte, the conqueror of Italy, for help. He placed them on the pay list of Lombardy (the Cisalpine Republic), now under French control; and he even took a Polish officer, Josef Sulkowski, as an ADC.[2] Gradually the Polish troops would become a major force within the French army, eventually rising to a corps with some 13,000 soldiers.

1807: CREATION OF THE CHEVAU-LÉGERS POLONAIS DE LA GARDE

Late in 1806, with large parts of Poland now occupied by the French and their allies, its citizens, hoping for a renewed independence, were ready to fight alongside their liberators in order to free the country from the Russian and Prussian yoke. General Dombrowski was recalled from Italy to Poland, and declared in front of the Emperor that he would raise an army of 40,000 men to help the French defeat the Russians.

On 19 December 1806, Napoleon made his entry into Warsaw to a tumultuous reception. In respect to him, and as was the custom when he visited the 'good cities' of his empire, a Guard of Honour was created to escort and protect him during his stay in the Polish capital. This guard was created at the initiative of Count Oginski, and commanded by Vincent Corvin Krasinski, nephew of one of the martyrs of the insurrection against Russian occupation. It took only a matter of days to find enough suitable volunteers, all of them from the best Polish noble families. These soldiers impressed the Emperor so much – by their stature, smartness, and level of education – that on 28 January 1807 he wrote to Marshal Berthier:

> My intentions are to levy a Corps of Polish Light Horse Cavalry [Chevau-légers polonais]. The soldiers must consist of persons who, by their education, can give me a warrant of morality. Their pay will

2 Josef Sulkowski served as aide to Gen Bonaparte in Italy and Egypt; he became a member of the Institut d'Egypte before being killed in the Cairo revolt on 27 October 1798.

be the same as that of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard. They will be organized into a corps of 4 companies, each 120 men strong, totalling 480... The Grand Marshal of the Palace, General Duroc, is to stay in Warsaw and will look after the formation of the corps. All officers may be commissioned, except for the colonel, who must present himself to me so that I can give him my consent...

As the fighting between the French and Bennigsen's Russians resumed in February 1807, Napoleon allowed a number of these Guards of Honour to accompany him, and thus they found their way to the cruel battlefield of Eylau on 8 February. In freezing cold and a blinding snow storm, the beaten Russians retreated, leaving the field – and its ghastly carpet of 40,000–50,000 dead and wounded men and huge numbers of horses – to the French. After this devastating ordeal both armies retired to winter quarters.

Reorganizing his troops, Napoleon wrote to Duroc from Landsberg on 18 February that he wanted within a month 600 Poles instead of the previously requested 480 men. The Emperor believed that he could count on Polish pride, courage and sense of duty to find the extra volunteers. In his usual hurry to push ideas forward, he wrote on 4 March, from Osterode, to his Foreign Minister, Talleyrand, instructing him to enquire about the progress of the unit's formation, and that he should ask the Polish authorities to provide local horses. He impressed on Talleyrand that he was to attract young men like those who had escorted the Emperor during his stay in Warsaw, for service in what was now called the Polish Light Horse Regiment of the Imperial Guard.

Yet another letter to the minister, dated 13 March, informed him that he was being sent a draft for the decree announcing the creation of the Polish regiment of his Guard; Talleyrand was to take this draft to the most influential members of the Polish government, and to discuss it with them article by article. In the same letter he stressed once again that he only wished to see well-educated young men, with a sense of personal honour, enlisted in the new unit; all would therefore be proficient riders already, ensuring that their training proceeded swiftly. Five days later Napoleon informed Talleyrand that he would only sign the decree once he was certain that the plan would succeed.

Trooper in blue and crimson full dress, saluting an officer in special full dress of white with crimson facings, by B.Gembarzewski. The silver lace borders to the troopers' crimson collar, lapels and cuffs were unique to this regiment. With full dress the *czapska* was garnished with a double white cord with tassels and flounders. Note the tight fit of the trooper's trousers, and the carbine clip hanging at his right hip. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

Organization and recruitment

After less than two months of negotiations with the Polish government and preparations to turn his plan into reality, on 6 April 1807, Napoleon signed at his Imperial camp at Finkenstein the decree announcing the raising of a regiment of Polish Light Horse of the Imperial Guard.

The regiment was organized into four squadrons of two companies each. Each company was to consist of: 1 captain, 2 first lieutenants, 2 second lieutenants, 1 sergeant-major, 6 sergeants, 1 quartermaster sergeant, 10 corporals, 97 troopers, 3 trumpeters and 2 farriers – in all, 125 men.

Col Krasinski's dark blue full dress uniform, with crimson facings and silver lace and metal; the tall white plume and tasselled waist sash were parts of this order of dress. Krasinski served Napoleon like a paladin or courtier, travelling to Russia in 1812 with a large train of servants and cooks and a complete wardrobe – several wagonloads of cutlery, tableware, uniforms and equipment – as well as a large number of horses with their grooms.

The regimental staff would number: 1 colonel, 2 (colonel-)majors, 4 squadron leaders, 1 quartermaster-treasurer, 1 captain instructor, 2 adjutant-majors, 4 sub-adjutant majors, 1 standard-bearer, 4 medical officers (of whom one each of 1st and 2nd Class and two 3rd Class); 1 sergeant-major assistant instructor, 1 sergeant wagonmaster, 1 veterinarian, 2 assistant veterinarians, 1 trumpet-major, 2 corporal trumpeters, 1 master tailor, 1 master trousermaker, 1 master bootmaker, 1 master armourer, 1 master saddler, 1 master spurrier and 2 master farriers. To bring the new regiment into line with all other Guard units, both majors, the captain instructor, the adjutants, quartermaster and surgeon-major were all to be of French origin and coming from within the Guard. All four sub-adjutant majors were of Polish origin and veterans from the Polish Legion.

To enter the regiment, the volunteer had to be a landed proprietor or the son of a proprietor, aged between 18 and 40 years old, and able to pay for his own horse, uniform and equipment. Those who were unable to find a suitable mount, a uniform following the dress regulations or the necessary equipment would be given what they lacked and the cost would later be deducted from their pay.

Those who wished to enter the unit had to present themselves to Prince Jozef Poniatowski, furnishing him with proof that they fulfilled all these requirements. After that, they had to report to the major who was responsible for organizing the regiment, who would enter their name, age, description, nationality, place of birth, and the names and occupations of their parents into the regimental registers.

The officer corps

The first commissions in the regiment were granted to the senior officers. By decrees of 6 and 7 April, Napoleon assigned Count Vincent Corvin Krasinski, colonel of the newly raised 3rd Polish Mounted Chasseurs and former commander of the Warsaw Guard of Honour, as colonel of the regiment. The 'colonel-majors' – lieutenant-colonels – were former squadron leaders of the Imperial Guard: Delaitre, first major, came from the Mamelukes and was now responsible for the new regiment's accounts, while Dautancourt, second major, came from the Gendarmerie d'élite and was now responsible for the formation, organization and discipline of the companies. These officers were charged with the overall organization of the regiment. Other commissions granted by the same decrees were to lieutenants Duvivier of the Mounted Grenadiers of the Guard, and Polreczki of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard, who were to serve as adjutant-majors. With the exception of Col Krasinski, all these officers were ordered to leave on 8 April for Warsaw, where they were to arrive two days later, and where the regiment would be based at the Mirowski barracks.

Foreign Minister Talleyrand was informed about the first commissions and was instructed to present the officers upon their arrival to Prince Poniatowski and other Polish authorities, in an effort to obtain their swift collaboration. The Emperor's desire was to have at least one squadron fully equipped, mounted and at his disposal as soon as possible. An officer carrying the necessary funds was sent to Posen to buy sabres, pistols and carbines and to deliver them to Warsaw. Still anxious to attract intelligent and educated volunteers, Napoleon

repeated that he would give the Poles the same rates of pay as his Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard.

On 20 April 1807, Bessières wrote to the Emperor that the officers of the regiment were asking permission to accept men of shorter stature than originally specified, because otherwise they would have problems finding the required numbers. He also wrote that the officers were asking for at least one French NCO in each company, plus French trumpeters; and that they sought permission to find troopers in the newly created Polish regiments of the Line. The letter bears a note in the Emperor's hand to the effect that Bessières must decide for himself what was best for the regiment.

Other commissions in the regiment were now granted. Lubienski, second-in-command of the Polish Guard of Honour, and Kosietulski, also a former officer in the Guard of Honour, became squadron leaders. Captains' commissions went to Antoine Potocki, former ADC to Prince Poniatowski; Jermanowski, ADC to Gen Duroc; Matachowski, nephew of an officer in the Guard of Honour; Meyer and Byszawski, both officers of the Guard of Honour. Those named as first lieutenants were Gorski, then serving with Murat, the Grand Duke of Berg; Wibitzki, who had family connections to a member of the Polish government; Szymarowski, serving with Marshal Davout; Gutakowski, son of a member of the government and officer in the Guard of Honour; Fredo; Goraiski, Lubienski junior and Rostworouski, all three from the Guard of Honour. Former Guards of Honour commissioned as second lieutenants were Lubomirski, Jordan, Gorski, Rembienski and Trzecinski.[3]

Count Tomasz Lubienski was second-in-command of the Guard of Honour at Warsaw during Napoleon's visit, and was commissioned a squadron leader in the regiment on 7 April 1807. He led the second charge at Somosierra, and would afterwards claim the credit for its victorious outcome. Early in 1809, while still serving in Spain, he overran a British squadron at the head of a 29-strong platoon. In February 1810 he was commissioned colonel of the 2nd Lancers of the Vistula. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

On 5 June 1807 the Emperor signed at Finkenstein a decree commissioning further officers and even promoting some already serving in the regiment: Prince Paul Sapieha and Matachowski, as squadron leaders; as captains, Dzjewanowski, then serving in that rank on the staff of Gen Milhaut, Vincent Radziminski, and François Lubirski. First lieutenancies went to Olzewski, an officer on the staff of Marshal Bessières; Zielinski, a former officer serving on the staff of Gen Zajeczec, as was Denisko; Dembowski, an officer in the 6th Polish Regiment; Krzyzanowski, an officer on the staff of Marshal Lefebvre; and another Radziminski, an officer in the 1st Polish Cavalry Regiment. Second lieutenancies were granted to Rivière Zatuski; Kicki, a lieutenant in the 1st Polish Regiment; Ostaszewski; Prasmowski; Luszezewski; Leszizynski, a lieutenant on Marshal Lefebvre's staff; André Niegolewski, a lieutenant of Polish cavalry; Kuminski, a lieutenant in the Pfeiffer Uhlans regiment; and more former members of the original Guard of Honour – Puzina, Lanskozinski, Brocki and Czosnowski. The regimental

3 The Polish names as given on regimental rolls or in decrees do not always correspond with Polish spelling, simply because French officers unfamiliar with the language usually chose simpler phonetical forms.

2nd Lt Andre Niegolewski, the youngest officer in the regiment at the time of Somosierra. After returning from a reconnaissance he saw the attack of the 3rd Sqn, and immediately had his men resaddle their horses and follow the charge. He reached the top of the pass, where his horse was shot and he was trapped under it; Spanish soldiers robbed him and bayoneted him several times, but he survived, going on to fight in Russia and Saxony. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

eagle-bearer was 2nd Lt Jordin, and the regimental quartermaster-treasurer Lt Raullet, who came from the Mamelukes; Onofrion Luccy became medical officer 2nd Class.

Nonetheless, even though the necessary officers were easily found, the majority did not belong to the leading aristocracy of Poland. The reason for this was the Treaty of Tilsit, signed between Napoleon and the Tsar in July 1807 after the defeat of the Russians at Friedland. This established the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, under the rule of Napoleon's ally King Frederick Augustus I of Saxony. This polity more or less restored Poland's political existence, and originally consisted of the major part of the central Polish provinces that had been absorbed by Prussia in 1793 and 1795, plus the region of the Notec (Netze) River acquired by Prussia in 1772. Not included in the Grand Duchy were Danzig, which became a free city, and the district of Bialystok, which was ceded to Russia. (Later, in 1809, the Grand Duchy would be increased by the territory that Austria had seized under the Third Partition.)

This Grand Duchy fell far short of restoring the independent Kingdom of Poland for which most Poles had hoped, and many were disappointed in Napoleon to a greater or lesser extent. Serving within the French Imperial Guard was, of course, a great honour; but why serve a foreign sovereign when they now had a national army led by men like Prince Poniatowski? Another obstacle to the aristocracy's wholehearted loyalty to the French army was that it was still the heir to the Revolution which had beheaded the King of France. Before the elite within the Polish nobility could offer their services – not only to Napoleon, but even to the new Polish army which he was sponsoring – they needed more time and reassurance.

From Warsaw to Chantilly and Bayonne

The vacancies in the rank and file were filled step by step and, once fully equipped, the first detachments would leave Warsaw. On 17 June 1807 the first 120 NCOs and troopers and six officers, all belonging to the 1st and 5th Companies, left the Polish capital for Königsberg, leaving a handful of horses and some 40 volunteers at the barracks at Mirowski. Colonel-Major Dautancourt accompanied them during their first day's march, as he would do with every subsequent detachment. This first detachment was commanded by Sqn Ldr Thomas Lubienski; full of enthusiasm and zeal, he still lacked experience in command, and the more seasoned Capt Adj-Maj Polreczki was assigned to assist him.

Even while the first soldiers were leaving their barracks the Emperor was still fretting about these newcomers to his Guard. On 4 August 1807 he sent a letter from Saint-Cloud to Marshal Davout, who commanded all troops stationed in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, asking him to ensure that the Polish Light Horse Regiment was well organized and staffed, that the soldiers were indeed land-owning gentry, and that one squadron would arrive in Berlin with the rest of the Imperial Guard. Davout was to let the Emperor know when the regiment had been organized.

After a rigorous inspection by ColMaj Dautancourt, a second detachment – 101 men commanded by 1st Lt Gorayski – left the Mirowski barracks on 30 August; they were to join up with the first detachment, who were now in the neighbourhood of Hanover with the rest of the Imperial Guard Cavalry that had returned from Tilsit.

Arriving in Hanover on 3 October, they joined the Guard, commanded by Gen Arrighi, and left with them for Paris on the 17th. At the capital they were assigned barracks at Chantilly; however, although some men and unfit horses were left there, the unfolding events in Portugal led to their being ordered to march even deeper into France, arriving in Bordeaux on 28 November. During this march Sqn Ldr Lubienski took command of both detachments.

Seventeen days after the second detachment had left Warsaw, a third was reviewed by Prince Poniatowski before setting off the next day for Paris; 137 men strong, it was commanded by Sqn Ldr Kozietulski. When the third detachment arrived in Chantilly, they left their sick men and horses there and replaced them with the now-recovered convalescents left behind by the previous detachments. Kozietulski then led his troopers south for Bayonne – the assembly point for all the troops that were to enter Spain (see below, 'The First Test: Spain, 1808').

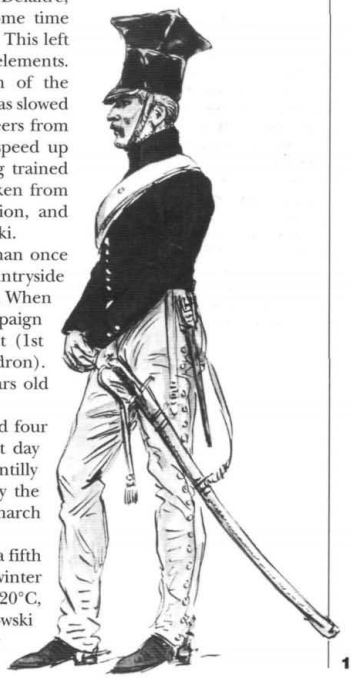
Another officer who had left for France was ColMaj Delaitre; however, after falling ill he was allowed to return home some time between the departures of the second and third detachments. This left Dautancourt alone to continue formation of the remaining elements. Marshal Davout was pressed to complete the organization of the regiment as soon as possible, but more than once the process was slowed by a lack of the necessary funds. Davout searched for volunteers from within the cavalry regiments of the Polish army, simply to speed up the formation of the Light Horse Regiment by incorporating trained men and horses. Thus 108 troopers with 200 horses were taken from Gen Zajeczek's division, 80 from Prince Poniatowski's division, and another 100 from the division commanded by Gen Dombrowski.

Horses were more difficult to find than men, and more than once ColMaj Dautancourt and Lt Trzczynski rode around the countryside for several days hoping to buy decent mounts for the regiment. When possible – and probably more in peacetime than when on campaign – the horses were grouped in squadrons by colour: chestnut (1st Sqn), bay (2nd Sqn), black (3rd Sqn) and dark grey (4th Squadron). They were to be 14¼ to 14¾ hands high, and five or six years old when purchased.

On 15 November, a fourth detachment of 123 troopers and four officers paraded before Davout, and left Warsaw on the next day commanded by Capt Radziminski. When they arrived at Chantilly they too swapped their sick horses and men for those left by the previous detachment, and after a short stay they resumed the march south towards Bayonne.

Volunteers were still arriving at the Mirowski barracks when a fifth detachment was ready to march off on 16 December. In severe winter conditions and temperatures sometimes dropping to minus 20°C, 152 troopers and four officers commanded by Capt Dziewanowski left Warsaw for Dresden, where they arrived on 12 January 1808, moving off for Chantilly after a rest of just 24 hours.

Instructed to join the rest of the Imperial Guard at Bayonne, near the Spanish border, the Polish Light Horse set off in their dark blue stable jackets and white heavy cotton drill trousers; a waxed or oiled cloth cover protected the expensive *czapska* against the weather. Note the carbine bayonet frogged to the sword belt on the left hip. (Drawing after a description by Dautancourt, by Bénigni, Salon de Provence)



Baron Jan Kozietulski, one of the original squadron leaders of the regiment, commanded the 3rd Sqn during the famous charge up the pass of Somosierra. At the second battery his horse was shot under him, leaving him to limp back to the French lines badly bruised while Capt Dziewanowski took the squadron forward. On 25 October 1812 in Russia, once again commanding the Emperor's duty squadron, Kozietulski was wounded while saving Napoleon from being captured by a troop of Cossacks. He was promoted major on 30 May 1813.

On the 14th, Bessières reported that there were 60 troopers in the regimental barracks at Chantilly, where Dziewanowski's detachment arrived on 3 March. After the usual exchange of sick for replacements they marched off for the Spanish border. On 28 January a strong detachment commanded by 1st Lt Wybicki left Chantilly for Bayonne with more men and horses that had regained their strength.

Meanwhile, less than a month after the previous detachment had left Warsaw, a sixth had got on the road. Commanded by Capt Count Pierre Krasinski, assisted by Lts Zaiaczek, Jezewski, Rowicki and Trczynski, the 171-strong detachment set off for Chantilly and Bayonne on 12 January. First, however, they rode to Marshal Davout's headquarters at Skierniewice, where – three days later, and in the presence of their Col Krasinski – they paraded in front of him. The next day, 16 January, the detachment left for Chantilly. When they passed through Dresden they also had to parade in front of their new sovereign the King of Saxony.

With large parts of his regiment spread out along the roads of Europe between Warsaw, Chantilly and Bayonne, Col Krasinski left Warsaw for Paris on 23 January; after a brief stay he travelled on to Bayonne, where he arrived in late February to await the remainder of his unit. On 3 March 1808 a seventh and final detachment, 204 strong, left their barracks at Warsaw, and paraded in front of Marshal Davout. Dautancourt stayed at the Mirowski barracks that day to deal with paperwork and the setting up of a recruiting office for further volunteers. Then, after a stay of nearly ten months in Warsaw, he left the Polish capital to join his troops heading towards Davout's headquarters. There, after the inspection, some of the officers were invited to join the marshal for breakfast.

A large number of Polish and Jewish merchants who still had to be paid followed the final detachment. Dautancourt informed the marshal that everyone had been paid except for those who were now standing in his courtyard. Enraged at their insolence in coming to his palace without invitation to demand payment, Davout had them chased off – but he still saw to it that they were paid, on 13 and 16 March.

With the last troops of the Light Horse Regiment leaving Poland, all the officers who had helped Dautancourt during its raising now left with him. Among them were Capt Duvivier, responsible for discipline and training; the *officier d'habillement* Lt Pfeiffer, responsible for uniforms; and Lts Ambroise Skarzynski, Jasinski and Kruszewski. Lieutenant Prince Jozef Giedroyé, from Lithuania, caught up with the final detachment later at Erfurt. After a march of 77 days, Dautancourt and his officers and men arrived at Chantilly, where the sixth detachment awaited them in order to march together to the Spanish border. However, in the harsh winter conditions both detachments had suffered casualties on the march among the men and horses; uniforms and equipment had suffered not only from the weather but also from the inexperience of the troopers, and much re-equipment was needed.

While at Chantilly the officers were briefed about the requirements of service in the Imperial Guard, learning the rules that governed the honour of accompanying the Emperor and Empress whenever they travelled. They also had to provide guard pickets at the Louvre, and in the meantime worked to get the *escadrons de guerre* ready to march off

to the Spanish border. On 23 June 1808 the order was given to leave Chantilly for Bayonne on the 26th. Every available officer, trooper and horse was to accompany ColMaj Dautancourt, leaving at the regimental barracks only 88 men (of which 26 lacked horses) plus some 40 in hospital, and 62 sick or injured horses. Lieutenant Sliwoski took command at Chantilly, under the instructions of ColMaj Delaitre, who was still on sick-leave and staying near Epernay.

Dautancourt's command ready to join the Grande Armée of Spain consisted of 361 officers and men, as detailed in the panel at the bottom of the page.

With the wagons loaded and the men fully equipped, wearing their stable jackets and cotton drill overalls buttoned down the outer seams, the column rode out of Chantilly and took the road to the south-west.

THE FIRST TEST: SPAIN, 1808

While the Polish Light Horse Regiment of the Imperial Guard had been forming, the situation in south-west Europe had changed dramatically.

When the Emperor had signed his decree imposing the so-called Continental System – a blockade that closed all ports in continental Europe to the merchant shipping of Britain and her allies, and forbad all trade with her – he knew that Portugal was one country that would certainly resist him. Portugal had important economic links with Britain, and her harbours also supplied the ships of the Royal Navy.

Since France's weaker ally Spain lay between her and Portugal, Napoleon negotiated free passage through Spain for his troops in order to invade Portugal in November–December 1807, offering the inducement of a share of Portuguese territory. While Gen Junot's corps invaded Portugal, Napoleon also took the precaution of securing with French garrisons all major passes, strategic positions and towns between the French and Portuguese borders. Spain, an ally of France for more than a decade, was ruled by a corrupt and weakened government, and Napoleon had encouraged divisions even within the royal family. Spain was such an unstable ally that she had started secret negotiations with Russia shortly before the Prussian campaign of 1806; the Emperor had no illusions about Spanish loyalty, and had long planned to extend his rule over the whole Iberian Peninsula.

To secure his position, more and more French troops entered Spain, including elements of the Guard. On 20 February 1808, Napoleon wrote to Marshal Murat – who would install himself in Madrid as the Emperor's proconsul on 23 March – that the following units had to be at Bayonne by 1 March: 1,200 men in two battalions of Foot Chasseurs of the Guard, commanded by Gen Friederichs; 6 guns; the regiment of Poles; a 200-strong squadron of the Mounted Chasseurs; an equal squadron of Mounted Grenadiers; a squadron of mounted Dragoons, and 160 Gendarmes d'élite. A detachment of the most tired men of each unit was to stay at Bayonne for a day or two before marching on into Spain.

Dautancourt's command for Spain, 1808

	Men	*Horses*
Colonel-major	1	8
Captain adjutant-major	1	4
Captain instructor (acting adj-maj)	1	4
Captains	2	6
Lieutenants	7	14
Sub-adjutants major	2	6
Surgeon-major	1	2
Sergeants & quartermaster-sergeant	25	25
Corporals, troopers, trumpeters & farriers	321	321
Wagons carrying uniforms	4	8
Totals	*361*	*390*

With Madrid in his hands Napoleon forced the inept King Carlos IV to abdicate and took the royal family into captivity. The omnipresence of the French troops and the forced abdication were too much for the people of Madrid, resulting in an uprising in the Spanish capital on 2 May 1808.[4] French reaction was swift and bloody, but spontaneous resistance began to spark in many parts of the country.

Arriving in Spain, the Polish Light Horse still had no real field experience, and Marshal Bessières entrusted Gen Lasalle, who commanded the cavalry of his corps, with the task of training them. (A born cavalryman and perhaps the finest light cavalry officer in the French army, Lasalle once said that any hussar who had not got himself killed by the age of 30 was a jackass; he himself would be killed at Wagram in 1809 at the age of 34.) Lasalle employed the Poles in combined units with Mounted Chasseurs of the Line, to perform outpost duties. One of the Polish officers later wrote of him: 'It was in General Lasalle's school that we learned outpost duties. We have kept a precious memory of this general, in whom all the lovable and imposing qualities of a born marshal were combined.'

On 22 May 1808 the Emperor ordered his older brother Joseph, King of Naples, to Bayonne, where he was confronted with the idea of becoming King of Spain after an 'election' contrived by a pro-French faction. Reluctantly, Joseph accepted; he left Bayonne on 9 July, being escorted as far as Irun by 50 Polish Light Horse of the Guard. In the meantime French troops were clearing the road for the new king by fighting the fragmented Spanish armies and popular insurgents. One of these battles was at Medina del Rioseco on 14 July, when Marshal Bessières – whose cavalry comprised Lasalle's two regiments of Mounted Chasseurs of the Line and three squadrons of the Polish Light Horse – defeated the much larger Spanish armies of Castile and Galicia under Gens Cuesta and Blake. Joseph entered his capital on 20 July, to be greeted by nothing but empty streets.

Baron Ignace Stokowski, commissioned into the regiment as a captain in April 1807, was wounded and taken prisoner by the Russians at Ruda during that year. Promoted squadron leader in March 1808, he was present at Somosierra, and distinguished himself at Wagram in 1809. He commanded one of the squadrons serving in Spain in 1810–11 and was wounded at Pancorbo. He later became colonel of the 7th Light Horse Lancers of the Line, the former 1st Lancers of the Vistula. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

Just two days later the French and Spanish alike were astounded by the news that an 18,000-strong French corps commanded by Gen Dupont had been forced to surrender to a smaller Spanish force at Bailen in Andalusia. The news of this exploit ran through the Peninsula like fire, provoking a general uprising against the French garrisons. For the first time since Napoleon took power the French had suffered a major military setback; after just ten days on the throne, King Joseph had to abandon Madrid and the army retreated towards the River Ebro.

The situation of the Guard in Spain on 2 August 1808 may be summarized as follows: in Madrid and the surrounding countryside, 700 infantry and 1,500 cavalry; with Marshal Bessières around Burgos, 1,600 infantry and 260 cavalry; on the march, 150 Polish Light Horse, with

4 See Men-at-Arms 429, *Napoleon's Mamelukes*

another 400 still at Bayonne. These latter were presumably part of the 500 Polish Light Horse which Napoleon had said, in a letter to Joseph on 30 July, would march towards Burgos.

Things went from bad to worse in the Peninsula. On 14 and 16 August respectively, the French were forced to abandon their sieges of the major Spanish strongholds of Zaragossa in Aragon and Girona in Catalonia. Almost simultaneously in Portugal, a British landing force under the temporary command of Gen Sir Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington) defeated one of Gen Junot's corps at Roleia, and the rest of his army at Vimiero (17 and 21 August). Junot was forced to capitulate, and on 30 August signed the Convention of Cintra, being allowed by Wellesley's incompetent superiors to sail home to France. Meanwhile the French troops on Spanish territory were forced to fight not only what was left of the Spanish regular army, and a British force advancing into Spain under Gen Sir John Moore, but also a a very cruel and costly war of counter-insurgency against the guerrilla bands which were springing up astride their lines of communication.

There was a story – whether true or not is impossible to know – that on the morning of 30 November 1808, while Napoleon was resting beside a campfire after eating, a Polish trooper walked up. The Emperor's entourage tried to stop the soldier, but Napoleon allowed him to come closer; the trooper went to the fire, lit his pipe, and calmly began to walk off. The Emperor's aides protested that he should thank Napoleon; at this the trooper turned and, pointing towards the pass of Somosierra, replied: 'Why should I? It will be there that I will thank him!' (Drawing by Job)

Napoleon takes personal command

At his palace at Saint-Cloud, on 7 September 1808, Napoleon was preparing to cross the Pyrenees himself and deal personally with this critical situation. He decreed the organization of the army that he was going to lead there. In addition to VI Corps of the Grande Armée, this would comprise a 6,000-strong reserve division (2nd and 12th Light Infantry, 43rd and 51st Line); six battalions of Fusiliers and six of Foot Grenadiers and Chasseurs would add 6,000 Guard infantry; and 1,500 men from King Joseph's Royal Guard would bring the reserve infantry corps to nearly 14,000 men. The Mounted Grenadiers, Chasseurs, Dragoons and Polish Light Horse of the Guard and the cavalry of the Spanish Royal Guard totalled some 4,000 riders; and four Line Dragoon divisions totalling 14,000 men in 16 regiments would bring the cavalry reserve to 18,000 sabres, supported by 60 guns of the Mounted Artillery of the Guard. The entire French army for Spain would field 135,000 troops, of which the reserve provided 34,000.

With this new campaign imminent, the Emperor wrote from Saint-Cloud on 24 October 1808, to War Minister Clarke: '... Inform the Duke of Auerstaedt [Marshal Davout], who commands the Army of the Rhine and who should be in Berlin, that my Polish Light Horse need another 100 men. He can go and see the War Minister of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw to ask where one can find them...' The following day he ordered Clarke to send reinforcements to Spain by the road Rambouillet–Tours–Bayonne, among them a Guard cavalry detachment of 510 men: 200 Mounted Chasseurs, 100 Dragoons, 100 Mounted Grenadiers, 60 Polish Light Horse and 50 Gendarmes d'élite; they were to leave on 27 October.

On 4 November 1808, Napoleon entered Spain, setting in motion his well-tried Imperial machine of destruction. (It is unlikely that he had any inkling that the war he was starting with such confident determination would become a six-year ulcer, draining his reserves and humiliating his marshals; nor that it would be remembered as much for its guerrilla atrocities – for slit throats, convoys wiped out from ambush, villages massacred and stragglers tortured to death – as for its conventional battles.)

The Emperor arrived on 11 November at Burgos, where he inspected the Guard three days later. On 15 November the Polish Light Horse numbered 4 squadrons with 37 officers and 678 troopers present; 137 men were serving elsewhere, e.g. as escort to Marshal Bessières; and 47 were in hospital, bring the total to 899 all ranks. The squadron leaders were (1st Sqn) Tomasz Lubienski, (2nd Sqn) Jan Leon H.Kozietulski, (3rd Sqn) Ignace Ferdinand Stokowski, and (4th Sqn) Henryk Ignacy Kamienski.

'The bravest of the brave' – Somosierra, 30 November 1808

Heading for Madrid, Napoleon left Burgos on 23 November. Stopping at Aranda, he left the Spanish generals uncertain as to the road he would take, thus forcing them to divide their forces between the passes of Guadarrama and Somosierra. The latter was the shorter route, but its narrow gorge made it easier to defend; nevertheless the Emperor chose this road, perhaps calculating that Spanish confidence in its defensibility would lead them to station fewer troops there.

On 29 November, Napoleon, followed by his Guard, arrived at his headquarters at Boceguillas. The 3rd Sqn of Polish Light Horse was serving as duty squadron, and continued its march to halt somewhere between Napoleon's headquarters and Somosierra, while the rest of the regiment stayed with the Guard.

In a doomed effort to protect Madrid, about 45 miles to his south, the Spanish Gen Benito San Juan had gathered an *ad hoc* corps of regular troops, reservists, volunteers and militia, in all slightly more than 20,000 men with 16 guns. With more than one approach to the capital, San Juan had to divide this small army into three different detachments. One, about 9,000 strong, was sent to the Guadarrama Pass; some 3,500 men were placed in an advanced position at Sepulvida; this left about 7,800 men with the 16 guns to defend the Somosierra Pass, the last main obstacle in front of Madrid.

The nature of the terrain favoured the defenders who, fuelled by their hatred for the French, considered their position practically impregnable. The road winds its way up to the top of the pass, crossing several bridges across small mountain rivers. San Juan deployed his troops on top of the steep slopes on each side of the road and overlooking it. At the crest of the pass he kept a reserve some 2,000 strong, together with ten of his 16 guns; the other six were dispersed down the road in three sections of two guns each. The first two guns, standing behind a stone bridge, were placed at the entrance to the pass, with a small, hastily erected earthwork to protect the gunners. The other two pairs were placed at regular intervals behind a turn in the pass itself.

OPPOSITE **The painting of Somosierra made, and shown at the Paris Salon, in 1810 by Baron Lejeune, ADC to Marshal Berthier and a well-known artist. As always, Lejeune's painting is a *montage* of different events that the artist had seen during the battle – not always at the same moment or on the same spot, but they do give us a genuine eyewitness version. In the centre background the Polish duty squadron, followed by other Guard cavalry units, charge into the mist and gunsmoke of the pass, while Gen Ruffin's infantry engage the defenders on the flanking slopes. On the bridge, just right of the tall cross, we can see one of the guns that were part of the first battery. At left centre, surrounded by his staff, the Emperor complains to a captured Spanish colonel about the cruel way French prisoners of war were murdered. In the right foreground, beside a grey horse, Napoleon's surgeon Yvan and the orderly officer Turenne care for the wounded Ségur. In the left foreground a wounded Polish Light Horse trooper holds his dying brother. We know that it was on 3 August 1810 that Turenne and Ségur came to Lejeune's studio to sit for their portraits. More visitors came and went the following month, when Lejeune painted other witnesses of the event – Col Letort, Page Barral, and Lubienski of the Polish Light Horse. A typically careful detail is Lejeune's inclusion of the pillars beside the road that showed its track when the snow lay deep in the mountains.**

At daybreak on 30 November the Emperor, accompanied by the cavalry of the Guard, left Boceguillas and went forward to Somosierra Pass. At around 9am, supported by six guns, Gen Ruffin's infantry division from Marshal Victor's I Corps attacked the slopes on both sides of the road. A thick fog hindered them, and from the moment some *voltigeurs* made contact with the Spanish troops they were received with musket volleys from above which nearly halted their progress. Another drawback was that the Spanish had destroyed parts of the road leading to the pass, thus delaying the artillery that should have supported the infantry's efforts from getting into action. General Bertrand was charged by the Emperor to make the road accessible. Slowly the infantry gained ground, but so slowly that Napoleon became impatient; riding forward to the mouth of the pass with the cavalry of the Guard, he entered it followed only by his duty squadron and the Mounted Chasseurs of his escort.

At some time between 11am and noon the sun burst through the fog at last, giving better visibility, and several officers were sent into the pass to reconnoitre. Among these were the famous soldier-artist Chef de Bn Lejeune, and Lt Niegolewski with a section of Polish Light Horse troopers. The Poles were ordered to find a *langue* (a 'tongue' – a Spanish prisoner for interrogation); they did so, and then returned to their lines and unsaddled, to groom their horses and clean their equipment.

Somosierra, by Kossak. More than one artist, mainly post-Empire, depicted the epic charge, all showing different landscapes and none with the eyewitness authority of Lejeune. This impression does at least give a convincing idea of the battle-mad Polish troopers sabring the Spanish gunners before they can reload; but it is wrong in showing three cannon – the guns at Somosierra were in sections of two.

Napoleon, now informed about Spanish positions in and around Somosierra by the different reports – including some from French deserters who had been forced to serve in the Spanish army – moved forward and stopped near the French artillery battery. Observing the situation while enemy cannonballs flew past, he suddenly ordered the duty squadron to come forward and to charge the Spanish battery. That morning the duty squadron was the 3rd Sqn of the Polish Light Horse.

On 30 November the 3rd Sqn was led by Sqn Ldr Jan Kozietulski instead of its absent normal commander, Sqn Ldr Ignace Stokowski. The squadron was composed of Capt Pierre Krasinski's 7th and Capt Dziewanowski's 3rd Companies. General Montbrun, commanding the cavalry's advance guard, accompanied by Col Piré, ADC to Marshal Berthier, took the duty squadron forward; Montbrun had a fiery reputation, but at the sight of the enemy battery blocking the road even he decided that the operation was impractical, and halted the squadron out of sight of the Spanish defenders. The Emperor, on hearing that the mission was 'impossible', became so irritated that he replied that he did not know the word, and sent an officer of his household, Maj Philippe de Ségur of the 6th Hussars, forward to order the charge.

Squadron Leader Kozietulski, unable to disregard the Emperor's direct order, launched his squadron up the road towards the battery in column of fours. De Ségur also took part in a cavalry charge that became so celebrated that more than one alleged witness mentioned it in his memoirs; however, with no written orders existing, and heavy casualties among the officers of the 3rd Sqn, most of these testimonies were probably invented or adapted for personal reasons.

One contradiction concerns the actual order given by the Emperor: this is variously quoted as 'Here's an opportunity for you to earn your spurs, Monsieur – Clear that road for me, and quickly!', and the much less imaginative 'Poles, take the cannons!' A similar editing shaped Kozietulski's words, reported at various times as both '*Vive l'Empereur!*' and the more memorable 'Forward, you sons of dogs, the Emperor is watching you!' Whatever the words spoken, it is certain that the Polish duty squadron advanced towards the first Spanish battery at the bridge.

Riding *en colonne par peloton* into a light fog that still screened the enemy position, the ranks were ripped by the first balls while they were still picking up their pace, as the Spanish infantry opened fire from their flanks. Those who fell were probably trampled over by the troopers behind, and each time a man toppled from the saddle the soldier behind him shouldered his mount aside to replace him. At a distance of between 300 and 400 yards they received their first artillery salvo, shattering the head of the squadron. Distorted, the column halted, but

it took the surviving officers only seconds to regroup and continue the charge. Changing solid shot for canister, the Spanish gunners continued to serve their cannon, and whole ranks and files of the Poles were blown into ruin. An officer named Rudowski was killed by a musket ball while Kozietulski frantically urged his men to keep moving. De Ségur's memoirs state that he was also wounded at the first battery; here no quarter was given, and the gunners and some infantrymen were cut down on the spot.

Followed by more and more riderless horses, the Poles pushed forward to the next two-gun section a few hundred yards further up the pass. At this stage of the charge the squadron was joined by Niegolewski's platoon; seeing the rest of the 3rd Sqn moving off for the charge, they had immediately resaddled and ridden after their unit. The mist hid not only the second gun position but even the bend in the road, so the Poles did not know what to expect before they were struck by yet another volley of musketry and an artillery salvo that killed the officer Krzyzanowski. Squadron Leader Kozietulski's horse was hit and fell, leaving him badly bruised and dismounted; Capt Jan Dziewanowski took over command, and the second battery was silenced. By the time they reached it the surviving Polish horsemen were in a state of battle-madness, spurring forwards and sabring the Spanish soldiers left and right.

Arriving before the third artillery position, they were again received by the roar and flash of cannon. Shortly before Lt Rowicki's head was blown off he shouted to Lt Niegolewski that he could not master his horse, to which his comrade replied that he should let the reins hang loose. Captain Dziewanowski was left behind in the roadway with a shattered leg and a broken arm, heavily bruised and bleeding profusely; Capt Krasinski then took over command of the remnants of a squadron which seemed to consist of as many terrified and riderless horses as mounted men. The resistance from the Spanish troops dwindled; only the regulars tried to hold their positions, while the raw militia and volunteers fled back towards the reserves at the top of the pass, or simply took to their heels. Now it was Krasinski's turn to fall out of the ranks, dismounted; he succeeded in returning on foot, down a road covered with dead and wounded horses and men.

But now the Spanish reserve – some 2,000 men and a battery of ten guns standing at the top of the pass – faced what remained of the 3rd Sqn of the Polish Light Horse. Led by Lt Niegolewski, the victory-drunken Poles continued to press forwards into a salvo from the remaining Spanish guns; by a miracle they succeeded, and the unnerved Spanish troops fell back from the crest. Niegolewzski is supposed to have looked around in a daze and asked Sgt Sokolowski, 'Where are our boys?'; 'All killed, sir,' was the reply. Then the Spaniards regrouped and counter-attacked, driving the tired and bloodstained handful of Polish troopers back from the crest. Niegolewski's

A sergeant in full dress. The distinctions of his rank are an aiguillette of crimson-and-silver interlaced cord; the same colours in the crescent and fringe of his epaulettes; and the V-shaped silver chevron above his silver-bordered cuff. This portrait does not show the doubled collar edging sometimes described for senior NCOs. The Maltese Cross superimposed on the French cockade on his lance cap is clearly visible. (Warsaw Army Museum)

horse was shot under him and he was trapped; two Spaniards found him and took his purse and belt, leaving him where he lay with nine bayonet stabs, and two bullet wounds (some sources say a sabre cut) to the head.

* * *

The whole insane charge had taken only a matter of minutes. When Napoleon saw that the Poles under Kozietulski had taken the first battery, he ordered the regiment's 1st Sqn forward together with a platoon of Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard. Commanded by Tomasz Lubienski, this second charge had difficulty in following the 3rd Sqn due to the bloody debris it had left on the road. Arriving at the summit of the pass, Lubienski gathered the survivors of the 3rd Sqn together with his own men and placed them in battle formation; while they watched the retreating enemy they were joined by French infantry who secured the position, and by the 2nd and 4th Sqns, which passed through to pursue the fleeing Spaniards. Slowly the fog burned off, and the scene of the action became more clearly visible. The road was choked with dead and wounded men and horses, and with cannon and limbers abandoned in their well-protected positions.

The Polish Light Horse had not come to Somosierra as strangers to casualties. During their march towards Spain they had lost two troopers drowned near Poitiers while they were watering their horses in the River Clain. Further casualties had been suffered in actions such as Medina del Rioseco, and also from guerrilla attack; when Lt Bogucki was murdered in the village of Lagona his brother-officers had succeeded with difficulty in calming down the troopers who were ready to massacre the inhabitants outright. (Quite exceptionally, they found the assassin and brought him to trial.) Nevertheless, the butcher's bill for Somosierra would have given any regiment pause.

It is impossible to say how many men the 3rd Sqn fielded on the morning of the battle, but a roll call of 15 November gives a regimental count of 678 troopers, without officers. This would give a rough average of some 170 men per squadron; but some soldiers were certainly absent serving as escorts (for example, to Marshal Bessières), and others may have been in the rear lines caring for equipment, in hospital or on reconnaissance. An estimated squadron strength of about 150 all ranks is probably realistic.

The Emperor's bulletin of 2 December spoke of 8 killed and 16 wounded, but the reality was certainly different. Dautancourt, colonel-major of the regiment, gives 57 casualties, while the evening roll call on the day of the engagement lists 26 NCOs and troopers present but wounded. Other sources claim figures as high as 100 dead and wounded. Most of the wounded were later transported to Madrid, where they recovered.

Col Krasinski (right) in dark blue and crimson full dress. As commanding officer he wears a heron feather with a black plume base instead of the usual white plume. His parade sash is replaced by a crimson-and-silver striped waist belt, and his pouch belt is of the same materials. His collar, lapels and cuffs show a lavish edging of silver lace. See Plate A1. (Drawing by Chelminski)

Victor Roman joined the regiment in July 1807 as a trooper. At Somosierra he led a platoon and was wounded twice. In 1809, at Schönbrunn, Sgt Roman demonstrated the use of the lance before the Emperor in a sham fight against three Dragoons of the Guard. Commissioned second lieutenant in March 1809, and first lieutenant in February 1811, Roman was commissioned captain in the newly created 2nd Lancers of the Vistula on 6 April 1811. In this portrait he wears the officer's full dress of the Polish Guard Lancers, clearly showing the serpentine 'zigzag' lace around the crimson collar and lapels. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

In honour of his achievement Sqn Ldr Kozietulski – later to command the 3rd Scouts of the Imperial Guard – would be known as the 'Hero of Somosierra' for the rest of his life (although Lubienski tried to claim most of the credit for himself). Less lucky was Capt Dziewanowski, whose leg had to be amputated; he died in Madrid on 5 December 1808. Both Krasinski and Niegolewski recovered from their wounds.

On the day following the action the Emperor inspected the regiment, and ordered them to take battle formation. Trumpeters sounded the *demi-ban*; taking off his hat, Napoleon told them, 'You are worthy of my Old Guard! Honour to the bravest of the brave!' Later, the Emperor would grant Sgts Babecki and Waligurski and Trooper Juszynski the cross of the Legion of honour, for having each taken a Spanish regimental colour; in addition, another eight crosses were granted to troopers of the regiment, and the same number to its officers.

1809–10: AUSTRIA, AND RE-EQUIPMENT

Napoleon retook Madrid and re-installed his brother on the throne, and in January 1809 he drove Moore's British force up to Corunna and out of the Peninsula. A small British force was still in place in Portugal (and soon to be reinvigorated by the return of Wellesley); but after his brisk intervention the Emperor felt confident enough to leave the subjugation of Spain to his marshals while he returned to face a second front to the east. Austria saw the time as ripe to take revenge for her humiliating defeat in 1805; and in April 1809 she launched the War of the Fifth Coalition by invading northern Italy and Napoleon's ally Bavaria.

The Emperor had been pulling Guard units back from Spain towards the French border since January, and on 11 February 1809 he wrote to Marshal Bessières: 'You should have received the order to send here all of my Polish Light Horse. I want to reorganize this unit in Paris. The zeal they showed in Spain attracted my attention even more, and it is time that they received their definitive organization. Daumesnil's squadron, which is at Mont-de-Marsan, has already received the order to return to Paris.' On 15 February he wrote again to Bessières that the Mounted Grenadiers and Chasseurs and the Dragoons of the Guard should return to France with the exception of one squadron from each regiment, while the Polish Light Horse was to return in its entirety.

The question of lances

This 'definitive organization' would also change the nature of the regiment. On 26 February, Napoleon wrote to Gen Count Walther, commander of the Mounted Grenadiers of the Guard: 'My intention is that the Polish Light Horse will be armed with lances. Meet the regimental administration council to prepare for this, so that when the regiment return to Paris they can be given lances and start training with them.' A letter from Walther the next day ordered that such lances as were available should be issued to men returning from Spain.

Polish Light Horse Lancer troopers in marching/campaign order, before the issue of the lance – note aiguillette on right shoulder. The *czapska* is covered with black waterproofed cloth and shows no furniture other than the chin chain. The lapels of the blue *kurtka* are folded and buttoned across to the right, showing only a line of the crimson facing at the edge; note the crimson rear piping and turnback facing (left figure). The tight dress trousers are replaced with blue overalls, reinforced with black leather on the insides and bottoms of the legs, and with white metal buttons up the crimson stripe edging the outseam opening. His carbine-, pouch- and sword belts are white. On the march the rear corners of the blue, crimson-edged shabraque were hooked up to protect the embroidered Imperial eagle from dirt. (Drawing by Rousselot, Anne S.K. Brown Collection)

On 20 March 1809 the regiment arrived in Paris, where they took up quarters in the Ecole Militaire, and learned that they were to be transformed into lancers. They also received light cavalry sabres of the Year XI model, with steel scabbards; however, these were found to be too heavy and provoked many complaints. They were soon replaced with the lighter Hussar or Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard models, with a wooden scabbard covered with leather and brass.

The only lancer unit then serving with the French army was the Polish 1st Regiment of Lancers of the Vistula, which sent several officers and NCOs to Chantilly to teach the Guard regiment the handling of this weapon; however, it was only when Sqn Ldr Fredo returned from leave in Poland that serious training could begin, as he brought with him material to instruct the men in manipulating the lance. Later, in about 1811, the regiment's Col Krasinski would put his name to a manual for lance exercises that was probably written by Fredo. Meanwhile ColMaj Dautancourt inspected the uniforms, horses and equipment in order to see whether these were fit for lancers, and ordered the shifting of the trooper's aiguillettes from the right shoulder to the left.

With many veteran units of the Grande Armée engaged in the Peninsula, Napoleon organized a new army around Marshal Davout's corps stationed in Germany. For the first time the major part of it would be drawn from his allies of the Rhine Confederation, the Duchy of Warsaw and the Kingdom of Italy. Meanwhile his Guard was crossing Europe at speed in order to gather around the Emperor at the head of his Army of Germany. The entire Guard would be composed of ten infantry regiments each 1,600 strong, four cavalry regiments and 60 guns; together they provided Napoleon with a reserve corps of 22,000 men.

Reunited with the Emperor, the Polish Light Horse regiment not only provided duty squadrons but also saw action in some of the Empire's most famous battles. At Aspern-Essling (21–22 May) Napoleon suffered his first major battlefield reverse, and his army was forced to fall back to the south side of the Danube in the face of the Archduke Charles' attacks. Only some 300 of the Poles saw action, suffering light casualties – Capt Kozycki and six troopers were killed, and Lt Olczewski and 30 troopers were wounded.

After regrouping and strengthening his army Napoleon crossed the Danube once more on the night of 4/5 July, and met the Austrians in a two-day battle on the 6th–7th near the village of Wagram. Casualties in both armies were enormous, and the Polish Light Horse lost Lts Sliwowski, Mogienicki, Marcynski and Wielhorski and about 80 men killed, while Sqn Ldr Kozietulski, Capt Lubienski and Lt Jaraczewski and about a dozen troopers were wounded.

Again, popular legends grew up around the part played in the battle by Krasinski's regiment. It was said that some of the officers, while overrunning Schwarzenberg's Uhlans and the Latour Dragoons, took the lances of their opponents and continued fighting as lancers, prompting Col Krasinski to ask the Emperor to introduce the lance as a standard weapon for his regiment. Later, while at Schönbrunn, Krasinski is said to have ordered Sgt Victor Roman to demonstrate the use of the lance to the Emperor. Roman duelled with three Dragoons of the Guard, throwing two from their horses, and this convinced Napoleon to decree the transformation of the regiment into lancers.

Although the Emperor's earlier intention to do so was documented, as was Gen Walther's executive order of 27 February, these incidents may still have happened. It is possible that some officers did seize lances from Austrian Uhlans at Wagram – the lance was a traditional Polish weapon and, as we have seen, the regiment had been receiving some instruction over the previous couple of months. The demonstration at Schönbrunn might well have been ordered by the Emperor to see how his Polish regiment was progressing in the use of a weapon that was considered as particularly difficult to master. Perhaps Napoleon still needed to be convinced; he would not be the first or the last great commander who remained stubbornly wedded to the weapons with which he had won previous battles, neglecting opportunities to modernize his army.

With Austria forced to make peace by the Treaty of Schönbrunn (14 October 1809) at the cost of losing major territories, the Emperor's attention turned again to Spain – effectively the only part of mainland Europe where his rule was still contested. First, however, there was to be a great parade to mark the anniversary of his coronation on 2 December. Napoleon wanted to have his crack troops with him for this occasion, and sent orders to the Polish Light Horse to increase the speed of their march home so they would be present.

Polish Light Horse Lancer of the Guard, 1810, after B.Gembarzewski. This shows the 2.75m (9ft) lance, with the crimson-over-white pennon rolled and tied. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

Detachment for Spain

On 5 December the Emperor wrote to War Minister Clarke that the Imperial Guard was to be organized for a new Spanish campaign, in three divisions.

The 1st Division, commanded by Gen Roguet, was to gather at Chartres on 13 December; its cavalry would consist of a squadron each of Polish Lancers, Mounted Chasseurs, Mounted Grenadiers and Dragoons, plus a company of Mamelukes – in all 600 troopers, mainly chosen from those who were in Paris and who had not participated in the 1809 campaign. The cavalry of Gen Dumoustier's 2nd Division would be similarly composed with the exception of the Mamelukes; for this formation the Emperor specified that the men should be chosen from among those who were the least tired after the Austrian campaign. They were to pass in review before the Emperor and his court in front of the

An NCO in campaign dress reporting to two officers. He is shown here with double silver edging to his collar; this, the silver chevron showing above the gauntlet, and the mixed crimson-silver aiguillettes indicate that he is a *maréchal des logis* or sergeant. The senior officer sitting on the stone bench wears tight-fitting crimson trousers with double silver stripes at the outseams; this, as well as the heron plume, indicates that he could be Krasinski or Dautancourt. Note that while the NCO has his aiguillette on the left shoulder, in post-1809 fashion, the officers – who did not carry lances – retain theirs on the right. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

Tuileries on 15 December, and leave for Spain the next day. The 3rd Division was to be composed of infantry and artillery alone. The remaining Guard cavalry, together with 60 guns, 4,000 tools, six pontoon trains and a company of *Pontoniers* and *Marins* (sailors), were to be ready to march off on 1 January 1810 after parading before the Emperor. In all, the Guard would comprise 19,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry and 84 guns.

With two squadrons on their way to Spain, the Polish regiment was still exercising in the use of the newly introduced lances, and the first detachment so armed was presented for the Emperor's inspection in Paris on 16 December 1809.

Those Guard cavalry who served in Spain were amalgamated for tactical purposes; on 29 January 1810 the Emperor instructed Marshal Berthier, Major-General (chief-of-staff) of the Army of Spain, that two 'regiments' of cavalry should be organized: the two squadrons each from the Polish Lancers and the Mounted Chasseurs would serve as a light cavalry regiment, and the two squadrons each from the Dragoons and Mounted Grenadiers as a heavy regiment. After two days of rest at Bayonne to recover from their journey through France, they were to march towards Vitoria.

1810–11: THE SPLENDOUR OF VICTORY

With peace returning to the Continent – except for the irritating drain on reserves demanded by Wellington's activities in Portugal, and the Spanish guerrillas – the Polish Lancers of the Guard would participate in the splendid displays of the Empire triumphant. Paris had become the centre of Europe, attracting royalty and other important visitors. The years 1810 and 1811 saw the most magnificent festivities and celebrations, of which the most important were the wedding of Napoleon with Marie-Louise, daughter of the Emperor of Austria, their subsequent travels through the Empire, and the birth of Napoleon's son and heir, the King of Rome. On each of these glittering occasions the Polish regiment, together with the other Guard cavalry units, provided ceremonial escorts.

With the incorporation of Holland into the Empire, Napoleon transformed former Guard units of the King of Holland into a second lancer regiment – the 'Red Lancers'; accordingly, from October 1810 the Polish regiment became the 1st Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard.[5]

Despite their proven courage in battle, the Poles were still inexperienced as Guard troops; the Emperor paid attention to their training, knowing that beautiful uniforms and good manners alone

(continued on page 33)

5 See Men-at-Arms 389, *Napoleon's Red Lancers*

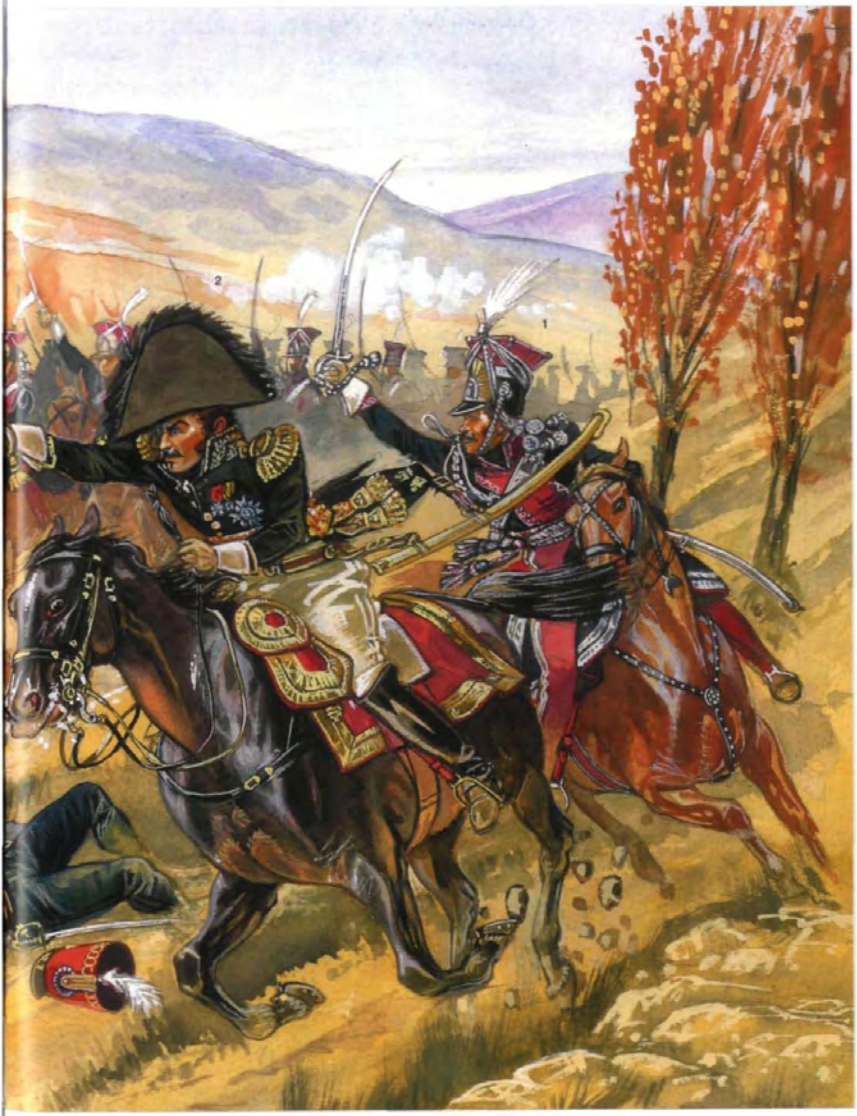
1: Colonel Count Krasinski, c.1809–10
2: Mounted senior officer
3 & 4: Officers in full dress

1: Officer, everyday service dress
2: Officer, campaign dress
3: Officer at Borodino, 1812

1: Light Horse trooper, full dress, 1807–10
2: Light Horse Lancer trooper, full dress, 1810–14
3: Sergeant, full dress, 1809–10
1
2
3
P. Cavaccia

THE POLISH LIGHT HORSE OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD AT SOMOSIERRA, 30 NOVEMBER 1808

D



E

1: Trooper, campaign dress, 1809–10
2: Trooper in coat-cloak
3: Sergeant, Campaign of France, 1814
4: Trooper, campaign dress, 1808–09

1: Kettledrummer, special parade dress, 1810–12
2: Trumpeter, full dress, 1807–10
3: Trumpeter, full dress, 1810–14
2
1
3
F. Lourcelle

1: Trooper, 3rd Regiment, July–October 1812
2: Trumpeter, campaign dress, 1807–10
3: Trumpeter, campaign dress, 1810–14

did not make impressive household troops. He held frequent parades in the inner court of the Tuileries Palace, not only as political gestures but also for the practical purpose of monitoring their training, dress, equipment and mounts. When they had first paraded in front of the Emperor they had made such a mess of it that he ordered his aide Gen Durosnel to take them in hand: 'These young men don't know anything; I give them to you – teach them to manoeuvre.' Durosnel took his task seriously; starting from zero, he trained them in all necessary basic skills required of a Guard unit, as Gen Lasalle had done in Spain in the matter of field manoeuvres.

Documents tell us how the men travelled to these prestigious parades. On 26 January 1811 *the regiment, 516 men strong, left its* quarters at Chantilly at 8am in the morning. Marching towards Saint-Denis, where they were to stay overnight, they found the place already occupied by other troops and were forced to disperse. The regimental staff and parts of the 1st, 5th, 2nd and 3rd Companies, commanded by Lt Wybicki, stayed at Saint-Denis. The 6th Company, commanded by Lt Luszczewski, stayed in the village of Pierrefite, while the 7th, 4th and 8th, commanded by Capt Pierre Krasinski, found quarters at La Chapelle, closer to Paris.

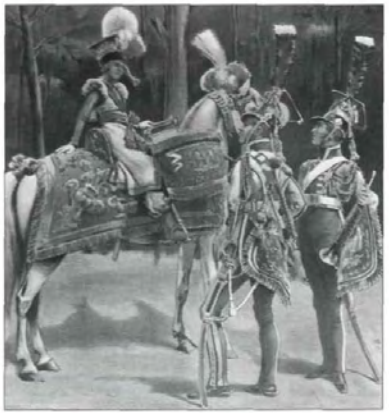
The next morning the regiment reunited at 10.30am near the Barrière de Clichy, from where they marched to the Place de Carrousel. The troops that paraded before the Emperor were as listed in the panel on page 34.

After the parade the regiment returned to the quarters it had occupied the previous evening, and arrived back at Chantilly on 28 January.

In March of the same year another parade was held in front of the Tuileries. *On the 23rd the regiment received the order to participate* the next morning. As soon as possible the regiment marched off towards Paris, being quartered as usual in villages near the capital. This time the regimental staff together with the 4th and 8th Companies stayed at Saint-Denis, the 1st, 5th, 2nd and 6th at La Villette, and the 3rd and 7th at Clichy. The next morning, 24 March, they gathered with the rest of the Guard Cavalry in the Place de Carrousel and paraded before the Emperor and his staff. Afterwards the troops were sent back to their quarters while the officers were to find their way to the palace, for this was a very special occasion – the birth of the King of Rome. The officers of the Guard gathered in the Salon des Maréchaux, and then had to parade in front of the Emperor and his court. The next day, *while Capt Zajaczek led the regiment back to* Chantilly, the senior officers were allowed to stay in Paris.

One of the favourites of the public during these parades was the regimental kettledrummer. On 15 August 1810, at Napoleon's birthday parade, Drummer Louis Robiquet, appointed on 1 July that year, made his first public appearance; his elaborate Polish-style costume is illustrated in

Mounted kettledrummer and trumpeters in full dress, 1810, by B.Gembarzewski. Drummer Louis Robiquet, appointed on 1 July 1810 (and never replaced after his loss in Russia), wears a theatrical Polish-style costume: a long-sleeved crimson waistcoat, under a knee-length white tunic with false sleeves hanging down the back, and loose sky-blue trousers tucked into fawn boots. His *konfederatka* hat was embroidered with gold thread; the fur turban was surmounted by a band of gold lace set with semi-precious stones, jade and turquoise; it also had gold cords and flounders, and was topped with a lavish and expensive crimson and white feather plume. According to Zaluski's memoirs, in the early years of the regiment's existence the trumpeter's full dress was an entirely crimson uniform with white facings, but around 1809 it changed to a white *kurtka* with crimson facings. For parades or other full dress occasions the trumpeters would fix heavily embroidered trumpet banners to their instruments – see details of these, and of the kettle-drummer's shabraque, on pages 47 and 34. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

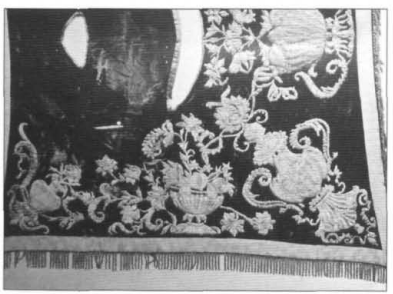


Troops paraded on 27 January 1811

1st Squadron (Capt Duvivier):
1st Platoon (Lt Prince Giedroyé)
2nd Platoon (Sgt Staniszewski)
3rd Platoon (Sgt Mosiolowski)
4th Platoon (Lt Lubanski)
2nd Sqn (1st Lt Wybicki):
1st Ptn (Lt Balinski)
2nd Ptn (Sgt Markiewicz)
3rd Ptn (Sgt Woynarowski)
4th Ptn (Sgt 'Malsch'/Malcz)
3rd Sqn (Capt Zajaczek):
1st Ptn (Lt Zawitski)
2nd Ptn (Sgt Smulski)
3rd Ptn (Sgt Gorski)
4th Ptn (Lt Gotartowski)
4th Sqn (1st Lt Brocki):
1st Ptn (Lt Hempel)
2nd Ptn (Sgt Stepnowski)
3rd Ptn (Sgt Dabrowski)
4th Ptn (Lt Cichocki)
5th Sqn (Capt Krasinski):
1st Ptn (Lt Chodakowski)
2nd Ptn (Sgt Komornicki)
3rd Ptn (Sgt Zolkiewicz)
4th Ptn (Lt Sub-Adj Ladroite)

an accompanying picture by Gembarzewski and as Plate G1. After serving in Spain and Austria, Robiquet would follow the regiment into Russia, where he disappeared at Borisov; no other kettledrummer was appointed thereafter.

The richly embroidered shabraque used by kettle-drummer Robiquet (see Plate G1). Since the regiment was part of the prestigious Imperial Guard, and raised with officers from the richer classes in Poland, such lavish display was normal. Other Guard cavalry regiments also had mounted drummers in 1810–11, within the regimental band or trumpet corps, and these soldiers sported the most elaborate costumes and saddlery that money could buy. With the start of the Russian campaign, the regular mass parades in front of the Tuileries Palace changed in character to more serious inspections of units that were marching off to war. The only later exception was the Emperor's birthday parade in 1813 near Dresden; some contemporary drawings of that occasion show horse drummers parading once again. (Warsaw Army Museum)



Reorganization

On 6 April 1811 the Emperor created the 2nd Lancer Regiment of the Vistula Legion (later to become the 8th Light Horse Lancers of the Line). Nineteen officers and NCOs of the Polish Lancers of the Guard were commissioned into the newly created regiment. Squadron Leader Lubienski became its colonel, Capt Adj-Maj Moreau a major, 2nd Lt Hoffmann its captain-quartermaster, Sgt Prendowski a lieutenant adjutant-major; 2nd Lt Roman became a captain, as did Jaraczewski, Jasinski and Gnatowski. Four sergeants became lieutenants, and seven corporals became second lieutenants.

On 15 June 1811, a commission of Guard senior officers gathered at the Ministry of War. Colonel-Major Dautancourt advised them to arm only the first rank of each squadron with lances, in order to prevent the second line from accidentally wounding the first. He also considered that a lancer carrying a lance, a sabre, a carbine, two pistols and a bayonet would be a walking arsenal, with needless negative effects on the soldier and his horse. The commission refused Dautancourt's propositions, and all troopers were fitted out with lances. The Russian campaign would show the wisdom of his suggestion; from April 1813 only the first rank of a squadron would carry lances and no carbines, and the second rank carbines but no lances. (The debate in the French Army over the efficacy of the lance would continue well after the fall of the Empire; highly effective if handled with skill by thoroughly trained men charging in the forefront of a formation, it was nevertheless cumbersome, and even dangerous when issued to all the enlisted men of a unit, especially if the training of replacements had been hurried – as was inevitably the case in the last year of the Empire.)

On 30 June 1811, during one of the regular parades in the courtyard of the Tuileries, the regiment received at last its Eagle standard (of the 1804 pattern). During the following campaigns, due to the requirements of field

A.Jaraczewski, a second lieutenant in May 1809, was wounded by two sabre cuts at Wagram. Not all the Polish Lancers enjoyed the rewards of peace after the Austro-Polish campaign; two squadrons served with one of the two composite Guard cavalry regiments in Spain in 1810–11. Jaraczewski distinguished himself at Mesgar on 20 June 1810, when he and some 30 troopers saved a detachment that was being attacked by about 350 Spaniards. He was promoted first lieutenant in February 1811, and was commissioned as a captain into the 2nd Lancers of the Vistula when that regiment was raised in April 1811. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

operations, the Eagle would be left in the Grand Salon of the Tuileries Palace; presumably the regiment carried some kind of colonel's pennant with them in the field.

Late in 1811 the Emperor was working intensively to bring his Guard up to battle strength, reviewing their armament and organization. On 11 October 1811, War Minister Clarke asked Napoleon whether the Polish Lancers belonged to the Old or Middle Guard. Clarke (now in fact the Duke of Feltre) mentioned in his letter that in the past the Emperor did not want the officers to receive higher ranks than those of Line regiments, although they had been considered part of the Old Guard. The Emperor asked the commander-in-chief of the Guard Cavalry to deal with the matter.

In December 1811 the Emperor recalled all Guard cavalry units serving in Spain; and on 6 January 1812 he decreed that the Lancers of the Guard were to be armed with carbines carried in the same way as in the Mounted Chasseur and Hussar regiments.

1812: RUSSIA

On 20 February 1812 an order arrived after nightfall, instructing the regiment to leave for Compiègne and Mainz with all the available men and horses. Led by ColMaj Dautancourt, the regiment set off. (Delaitre had by this time left the unit, becoming colonel of the 7th Mounted Chasseurs of the Line.) The 40 officers took 145 horses, each lieutenant receiving permission to take one supplementary horse with him.

The *petit-état-major* consisted of 14 men with 10 horses: the wagon-master, the trumpet-major, 3 corporal-trumpeters, the *sergent-maître de musique* (bandmaster), the veterinary and his assistant, 2 master farriers, the master tailor, an armourer, the master saddle-maker and the *'arconnier'* (probably also a saddler, since the *arcons* are important parts of a saddle). The latter four were dismounted.

The rank and file consisted of 585 lancers with the same number of horses (leaving at Chantilly none but sick men and horses). There were also 10 dismounted troopers and a mounted corporal with 21 draft horses, conducting 3 wagons and 2 field forges each with a 4-horse team. In total, the regiment thus mustered 650 men and 761 horses.

On 29 February 1812 a column of Guard cavalry comprising the 1st Lancer Regiment and two detachments of Mounted Chasseurs and Gendarmes d'élite arrived in Dresden, where they would stay for two days before leaving for Glogau. On 5 March, Napoleon instructed Bessières to send all remaining Guard cavalry towards Germany, with the exception of some 50 Mounted Chasseurs. The units returning from Spain were expected in Paris on 12 March and were intended to march off for Germany three days later.

For officers drawn from the better classes of Polish society, and even the nobility, elegant dress on all occasions was *de rigeur*. The officer standing at left wears *tenue de société* for walking out, with a bicorne hat, a *habit* in regimental colours with buttoned-back lapels, a light vest, knee-breeches, stockings and buckled shoes. The central figure is shown in campaign dress with crossed lapels, the point of the top one allowed to hang loose so that it displays the crimson side. The *czapska* cover was sometimes made of the thinnest cloth oiled until it became virtually transparent, showing off the colour and metal fittings of the headdress. The officer on the right wears his *tenue de quartier* or barracks dress, featuring a simple, single-breasted cutaway regimental tailcoat, a vest and full dress trousers, with the popular Polish-style forage cap or *konfederatka*. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

Presumably the regiment at that date was organized in four squadrons, since on 12 March 1812 the re-creation of a 5th Squadron was ordered. Both of its companies were to be raised in Posen, preferably from volunteers meeting the same requirements as those who entered the regiment in 1807. The regiment was given 200,000 francs to raise, equip and mount the new squadron.

At the start of the Russian campaign in summer 1812 the regimental officer corps were as listed in the panel opposite.

For the 5th Sqn, Capts Mikulowski and Coulon had been commissioned but had not yet received company assignments. The latter would serve in Russia as adjutant-major, because his company was not yet organized. One of the first lieutenants named to the 5th Sqn was Matlaszynski, who was still serving as paymaster for the regimental elements in or returning from Spain.

In addition to the officers named above, there were still six second lieutenants serving as supernumeraries. One of them, 2nd Lt Osinski, was appointed paymaster of the 5th Sqn at Posen.

* * *

Arriving at the Niemen, the Emperor made an inspection tour along the riverbank accompanied by Duroc, Caulaincourt, Bessières, Berthier and Haxo. He was escorted by a squadron of the Polish Lancers, and in the cold night hours he wore a Polish lancer's cape and *bonnet de police* (fatigue cap). The subsequent crossing of the river marked the fatal step that would lead Napoleon inexorably to his abdication two years later. The whole story of the Russian campaign is so well recorded elsewhere that there is no place here for yet another summary; this text will only mention points relevant to the regiment that is our subject.

Arriving near Vilna at the River Vilia, the French found the bridges destroyed. Napoleon, eager to know the situation on the far bank, ordered the duty squadron – Sqn Ldr Kozietulski's 1st Sqn of the Polish Lancers of the Guard – to swim across. Led by their commander, the horsemen plunged into the river with cries of '*Vive l'Empereur!*', but it soon became evident that some of the men were in danger of drowning in the strong current. General Krasinski and several officers who were good swimmers threw themselves into the river to save their men, limiting the loss to a single unlucky trooper.

Raising of the 3rd Regiment

Lithuanian Poles received the Grande Armée as liberators, and began dreaming of an independent Greater Poland. Enthusiasm in Vilna was so great that Napoleon tried to profit from it. On 5 July 1812 a decree commissioned Gen de Bde Konopka, one of the regiment's majors, as colonel of the 3rd Polish (Lithuanian) Light Horse Lancer

Regimental staff and company officers, summer 1812

Staff:
Colonel Gen de Brigade Krasinski
Colonel-Major Dautancourt
Major Gen de Bde Konopka
Squadron Leaders Kozietulski, Chlapowski, Jerzmanowski, Pierre Krasinski & Fredo (1st–5th respectively), plus Rostworowski (commanding the recruiting office and remount depot in Warsaw) & Szeptycki
Captain Adjutant-Majors Prince Giedroyé & Delaroch (French)
Captain Instructor Wybicki
1st Lieutenants Sub-adjutant majors Vianey (paymaster), Deshayes & Ladroite (all French)
2nd Lieutenant Sub-adjutant major Sikorski
2nd Lieutenant Assistant Instructor Martin Zolkiewicz
2nd Lieutenant Standard-Bearer Rostworowski
Surgeon-Majors Girardot & Maugra (both French)
Assistant-Major Gadowski
Sub-assistant major Kuszanski (at regimental depot)
Captain Quartermaster Raulet (at regimental depot)
Clothing officer Capt Pfeiffer (at regimental depot)

At company level:
1st Squadron:
1st Co: Capt Zaluski, 1st Lts Hempel the Elder & Roman, 2nd Lts Zawadzki & Horaczko
5th Co: Capt Stanislas Hempel, 1st Lts Malinowski & Mierzejewski, 2nd Lts Cichocki & Zamoyski
2nd Squadron:
2nd Co: Capt Jordan, 1st Lts Dobiecki & Gotartowski the Elder, 2nd Lts Gotartowski the Younger & Chodakowski
6th Co: Capt Skarzynski, 1st Lts Luszcewski & Balinski, 2nd Lts Lubanski & Wasilewski
3rd Squadron:
3rd Co: Capt Jankowski, 1st Lts Niegolewski, Vincent Toedwen & Wasowicz (interpreter to the Emperor), 2nd Lts Zaluski & Lacki
7th Co: Capt Brocki, 1st Lts Zielonka & Kilinski, 2nd Lts Fichnowski & Kujawski
4th Squadron:
4th Co: Capt Zajaczek, 1st Lts Kruszewski & Zawidzki (the latter stayed at the Chantilly depot), 2nd Lts Markiewicz & T.Toedwen
8th Co: Capt Trzeinski, 1st Lts van der Noot & Korycki, 2nd Lts Koch and Luhienski

Regiment of the Imperial Guard, and he left to take up this appointment on the same day. This new regiment would count five squadrons each of two companies. The conditions for entry were the same as for the 1st Polish Lancers: being a landowner or the son of one, and being able to pay for equipment, uniform and horse. The raising of the regiment was completed on 21 September. Uniformed like the 1st Regiment apart from the replacement of all white metal or silver fittings and distinctions with brass or gilt, fully equipped and well mounted, the new 3rd Lancers would start marching via Minsk and Smolensk to Moscow to join the rest of the Guard.

At 8am on 12 July the 1st Polish Lancers of the Guard rode out of Vilna; like so many other units in the Grande Armée, they had to leave behind there a large number of sick men and horses – 73 lancers and 65 horses, under the command of Lt Wisniewski. The regimental commander, Gen Krasinski, had served on the Emperor's staff since the latter had arrived in Vilna. From this point onwards ColMaj Dautancourt continued to command the regiment in the field, under the overall command of Gen Walther, colonel of the Mounted Grenadiers and commander of the Old Guard Cavalry (comprising the Mounted Grenadiers, Mounted Chasseurs, Dragoons and 1st Polish Light Horse Lancers).

The first phase of the Russian campaign would become an eternal chase after the Russian armies, in the hope of forcing them into a decisive battle. After several unsuccessful attempts to make them stand they finally accepted battle on 7 September 1812 near Borodino. The Guard, with some exceptions, was kept in reserve and only acted as spectators to a gigantic, bloody but indecisive clash. Not really

Officers of the 3rd (Polish) Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard – detail from a reconstruction by Louis Vallet. The 3rd Lancers wore the same uniforms as the 1st Regiment with the sole exception that all white or silver lace and metal became yellow or gold. The regiment's history was brief, and in late 1812 the survivors were admitted into the 1st Regiment.

RIGHT **Vincent Toedwen, who enlisted as a trooper in the Polish Light Horse of the Guard, was wounded at Somosierra. He was commissioned second lieutenant on 10 March 1809, served honourably at Wagram, and was promoted first lieutenant early in 1811. In August 1812 in Lithuania he was transferred with the rank of captain to the newly raised 3rd Lancers of the Guard. The later amalgamation of the remnants of the two regiments took him back to his former unit. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais)***

FAR RIGHT **Portrait miniature of Antoine Jankowski the Younger (Jeune), who was a second lieutenant in 1808, and distinguished himself in Spain at the battle of Medina del Rioseco. As captain commanding the 3rd Co, 3rd Sqn he served in Russia in 1812. Here he wears the white 'ball uniform' of the regiment, with extra silver embroidery on the crimson lapels, collar and cuffs. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)**

beaten but rather seriously shaken by their enormous casualties, the Russians left the battlefield to the French (who called Borodino the Battle of the Moscowa River). Soon afterwards the Grande Armée reached the Russian capital, to find it undefended and burning.

From the start of the campaign individual officers or whole platoons of the Polish Lancers were very often employed as interpreters by various brigade, divisional, corps and army staffs. The dispersal of sub-units from the body of the regiment serving south of Moscow was partly due to the Polish Lancers' reputation as being highly efficient when pitted against the Russian Cossacks, many of whom were similarly armed. At the time of the battle of Borodino the regiment numbered 955 officers and men; but of these, only 455 were with the Emperor and serving alongside the 2nd (Dutch) Lancers in a Lancer Brigade under the command of Gen Colbert. Meanwhile 125 were serving with Marshal Murat, commander-in-chief of the Reserve Cavalry; some 100 others were absent on various missions; about 200 were at the different depots at Gumbinnen, Vilna, Danzig and Smolensk; and the rest were in hospitals.

The Emperor complained repeatedly about the dwindling field strength of the regiment, and on 29 September he instructed Foreign Minister Maret, who had stayed in Vilna, to press the Grand Duchies of Warsaw and Lithuania into levying more troops and horses, including replacements to fill gaps in the ranks of Krasinski's Polish Lancers of the Guard. A major problem for the whole Grande Armée was the disastrous rate of losses among the horses, more from disease, fatigue and – particularly – bad fodder and care than from enemy action. When Gen Konopka's 3rd Lancers marched off to follow the rest of the Guard Cavalry across Russia they took with them 500 remounts for their comrades of the 1st Regiment.

At Moscow, on 8 October, the Emperor nevertheless decreed that the 1st Polish Regiment of Guard Lancers was to be brought up to a strength of no less than 1,500 men. Krasinski received permission to send a recruiting officer back to Lithuania to find more suitable volunteers.

After waiting in vain for the Tsar to accept peace terms, Napoleon was forced to give the order for the Grande Armée to retreat from Moscow and fall back to Smolensk and Vilna, in order to reduce his overstretched and frequently interrupted lines of communication. On 19 October the retreat began. With their experience of the severity of winters in northern Europe, the Polish Lancers had their mounts fitted with ice-horseshoes before leaving the capital.

One week after leaving Moscow, on 24 October, the regiment crossed the River Nara and heard cannonfire from the direction of Malo-Jaroslawetz. Colbert's brigade were committed to a rearguard action which cost the Dutch Red Lancers heavy casualties. From this date onwards, with the exception of the duty squadron attending the Emperor, the Polish Lancers would collaborate with the Dutch Lancers in protecting the flanks of the retreating columns. Once more their major opponents were Cossacks; and on more than one occasion, seeing the difference in colour of the uniforms, these would choose to charge 'the red ones' – the 2nd Lancers. From time to time men of the two Guard lancer regiments switched coats, in order to lure the Cossacks into an ambush; once the latter realized that they had been deceived and were facing Poles, they would flee from the field.

After the battle of Krasnoi on 17 November the strength of the 1st Regiment was down to 340, of whom only one-third were still mounted; these served as the duty squadron, while the rest had to join the long, ragged columns marching through the snow. When they arrived at Smorgoni on 5 December they found about 100 well-mounted reinforcements commanded by Col Stokowski, who had arrived from Königsberg. When Napoleon abandoned the frozen, starving remnants of his army on 8 December to return to Paris, he was escorted by 78 lancers selected from among the new arrivals, together with some Mounted Chasseurs and troopers from the 7th Polish Lancers of the Line. By the time he reached Rovnopol two-thirds of this escort had died from cold, hunger and exhaustion. At that point Neapolitan cavalry took over the escort duty.

On 10 December the remnants of the Grande Armée began to straggle into Vilna. In scenes of total confusion the few resources were plundered by the first-comers. Hundreds of drunken soldiers would die in the freezing cold in front of the locked doors of the city's houses, in streets where only a few months before they had been received as liberators. The 1st Polish Lancers of the Guard now mustered 432 men, but only 185 of these had been among the 1,109 who had crossed the Niemen so hopefully just four months earlier. Once they reached Kowno some discipline was restored; but those who were still able to hold a carbine, sword or lance numbered only 270 men, with about 200 horses.

Vincent Mikulowski; painted at a later date, our sitter still wears his old uniform, with adapted epaulettes showing an 'N'. After entering the regiment as a trooper in May 1807, Mikulowski continued to serve until Napoleon's first abdication, becoming a captain in 1812. He distinguished himself at Essling, Fuentes de Oñoro, Reichenbach – where he was wounded – and Brienne. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

Back in their Polish homeland the surviving lancers of the 1st Regiment received the hospitality and care that they badly needed. On 20 January 1813, 437 lancers with 257 horses were already more or less fit to serve with the army. The campaign was far from over: on 8 February 1813 the Russians occupied Warsaw and assumed control of the duchy. The Prussians had declared themselves neutral on 30 December 1812, and would change sides to join the Allies late in February 1813; increasing numbers of the smaller states of the Confederation of the Rhine would also break ranks later. The Austrian contingent in Russia had remained unengaged, and now stood aloof.

Reports show that on 11 April 1813 the 1st Polish Lancers of the Guard had 600 men with 300 horses, and the 3rd Lancers 600 men with 280 horses. Knowing that it would now be impossible to increase the numbers of Poles by voluntary enlistments, the Emperor merged both regiments into one. On 22 March 1813 he decreed their amalgamation into the 1st Regiment of Polish Lancers of the Guard, with the 1st Lithuanian Tatar Squadron attached. (This latter was a Muslim unit created in October 1812 by the Polish Maj Mursa Achmatowicz, who would be killed in action and replaced by one Sultan Ulan. The unit even had an imam, Aslan Aley, who also acted as a second lieutenant.) This amalgamation created a unit of six squadrons (three Old Guard and three Middle Guard; the Tartars served as an independent company and were considered Middle Guard).

Soon Gen Dombrowski's Polish Corps would arrive at Frankfurt, where it became a fine source for the necessary men to build up the required numbers in the Guard regiment. Other reduced units would also fall victim to amalgamations, among them the officers and men of the Krakow Lancers who, by decree of 25 June 1813, would become the 7th Sqn in the 1st Polish Light Horse Lancers of the Guard. Serving as Young Guard (by a decree of 9 July 1813), they would be numbered as the 13th and 14th Companies. This brought the unit to an impressive total strength of 1,750 men, and Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes was chosen to organize it.

In an incredibly short space of time since the virtual destruction of his Grande Armée, the Emperor had created a new army, larger than all previous ones; but this paper strength was deceptive. A high proportion of the rank and file were raw conscripts, seriously short of experienced NCOs and regimental officers to teach and lead them. It was also an army dangerously short of cavalry. While the Imperial Guard had been largely kept in reserve during the 1812 campaign, it would now have to play a major role on the

The only regulation item issued to the lancers for protection in severe weather conditions was the cloak-coat or *manteau-capote*, which replaced the simpler cloak formerly worn when the regiment was transformed into a lancer unit. The sleeves, with deep turn-up cuffs, protected the troopers' arms and hands while allowing them to handle their lances – unlike a cloak, which would have to be thrown back from the shoulders; the high crimson-faced collar and deep shoulder cape gave extra protection. The *manteau-capote* was made of heavy, coarse cotton in an off-white unbleached colour, and had raw-cut, unhemmed edges; some illustrations show the bottom edges burnt or badly frayed with heavy campaign use. (Drawing by Rousselot, Anne S.K. Brown Collection)

battlefields of Germany. At Bautzen-Würschen, Dresden and Leipzig the Polish Lancers would not be skirmishing on the flanks against Cossacks, but riding into pitched battles alongside the other regiments of the Guard Cavalry, hoping to turn the tide in favour of the Imperial Eagles.

The early stage of the 1813 German campaign saw the Emperor demonstrating flashes of his old genius. He faced a massive new coalition, but as yet its converging component armies were uncertain and unco-ordinated, leaving themselves open to being defeated piecemeal by the fast-moving Napoleon. He defeated a Russo–Prussian army at Lützen on 2 May, and captured Dresden. Napoleon beat the Russians and Prussians again at Bautzen-Würschen on 20–21 May, and negotiated an armistice from 4 June to 16 August which allowed him a breathing space. During this lull, however, came news of a crushing defeat at Vitoria in Spain (21 June); now Wellington's army would race for the Pyrenees to threaten south-west France, opening up yet another front.

Joachim Hempel, painted by Suchodolski wearing the officer's full dress with waist sash. His shabraque has a pantherskin saddle cover; but notice also a Roman 'I' below the Imperial cipher 'N' in the front corner. This probably indicates that the portrait was ordered after the fall of the Empire – as is also suggested by the style of the *czapska*, which is more Second Empire than First. Hempel entered the regiment as a trooper in July 1807, and saw action in Spain, becoming one of the first casualties in the Polish Light Horse when he was wounded by six sabre cuts at the battle of Medina del Rioseco in July 1808. He was commissioned second lieutenant in August 1809 and promoted first lieutenant in December 1811. The day after the battle of Dresden in August 1813, Hempel, together with some 40 lancers, charged the retreating Austrians and captured about 300 prisoners. Promoted captain in March 1814, he again distinguished himself during the campaign in France. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais.*)

When the armistice ended the Austrians finally came back into the war on the side of the Allies, confronting the Emperor in Germany with three separate enemy armies, which began defeating the detached forces of his marshals in detail. He succeeded in beating the Austrians at Dresden (26–27 August); there the Polish Lancers' casualties included Lt Kruszewski from the 8th Company, a veteran of Somosierra, who lost a leg to a cannonball and died in the arms of his brother-officer Niegolewski. However, on 8 October the balance tilted even further against France when Bavaria withdrew from the Confederation of the Rhine and joined the Allies; and a week later Napoleon was hedged in by the converging armies of Blücher, Schwarzenberg and Bernadotte at Leipzig. After this decisive three-day 'Battle of the Nations' (16–19 October) – which saw the Saxons, too, change sides against the Emperor – he was forced to retreat towards and across the Rhine. Now, at last, he would have to fight on the soil of France herself. With so many nationalities now changing sides, the Allies tried to influence the foreign troops remaining in Napoleon's army to turn their coats. On 25 October an envoy tried to persuade Gen Krasinski to bring the Polish Lancers over.

The record of the 1st Polish Lancers of the Guard in this 1813 campaign would become the subject of controversy, partly, no doubt, due to the jealousy of commentators from other units. In 1807 most of the Poles had been raw recruits, while most of the Dutch officers and men of what would later become the Red Lancers had already served on campaign for some time. By the Russian campaign the situation had changed; the Polish Lancers had to support the less experienced men now filling the ranks of the Red Lancers, and were the more feared by the Cossacks, who preferred to take on the Dutch regiment. In 1813 the situation was different again. The Polish and Dutch regiments, still serving together, were present at the battle of Reichenbach on 22 May.

Following the retreating Russian cavalry, the Dutch Lancers crossed the River Lõbauerwasser and took position on the far bank. Attacked by a stronger enemy force, the Dutch took all the burden of throwing back the Russians, at the cost of serious casualties; eventually supported by the other Guard Cavalry regiments, they succeeded in pushing the Russians into retreat. The correspondence and memoirs of the Red Lancers' officers are clear enough about their efforts, but do not mention the Polish Lancers; yet many years after the event, Grabowski and other Polish officers claimed the victory for their own regiment.

Back in France, having had an army of some 400,000 men reduced to about 70,000 for the second time in only 18 months, Napoleon faced the daunting task of scraping together new forces to defend France herself while many of his troops remained tied down in the Pyrenees, in Italy or in besieged German garrisons. On 9 December 1813 he decreed the reduction of the number of squadrons in the 1st Polish Lancers of the Guard to four. The excess officers went to the newly raised Polish Scouts (3rd Scouts of the Imperial Guard). Now the Polish Lancers numbered 763 men, not counting those still at the regimental depots.

Reorganizing the Guard Cavalry, the Emperor decreed on 14 December that the 1st Cavalry Division, commanded by Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes and serving with the Army of the North in Belgium (where Napoleon expected immediate danger), was to be composed of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Young Guard, the Dutch Red Lancers and the Polish Lancers. To re-equip the regiment, on 5 January 1814 the Emperor ordered 500 new complete uniforms with equipment and some 200 horses.

Baron A.Skarzynski in full dress. As a lieutenant he took part in the charge at Somosierra, and was promoted captain in February 1811. In late 1813 he was commissioned as a squadron leader in the 3rd Scouts of the Guard, and was created a Baron of the Empire for his splendid action at Berry-au-Bac during Napoleon's French campaign in March 1814. He continued to serve brilliantly during the last days of the Empire, defending a lost cause. (Rembowski, *Notice historique sur le régiment de Chevau-légers Lanciers Polonais*)

When the Allies crossed the Rhine in Germany and Switzerland, Napoleon realized that he had read their intentions wrongly, and immediately recalled Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' cavalry division of some 1,800 men. The Polish Lancers arrived at Reims on 24 January, and were ordered to leave straight away for Châlons where they were to join the Emperor with his relatively tiny army. The French Campaign of January–March 1814 provided one of the finest displays of Napoleon's tactical capabilities as he dashed back and forth to hold the converging Allied armies apart, but his reduced army was incapable of defeating the overwhelming Allied numbers. He abdicated for the first time on 6 April, hoping to salvage something for his son, but the Allies forced him into unconditional surrender on the 11th.

For his place of exile the Allies gave the former master of Europe the little Mediterranean island of Elba, and allowed him to take a handful of his Guard with him to this toy kingdom; of these, about 100 were Polish Lancers. The other survivors of the regiment returned with Gen Krasinski to Poland, where they would serve Grand Duke Constantine of Russia. Over the coming year the international Congress of Vienna would determine that the Duchy of Warsaw was to be

Baron Paul Jerzmanowski, commissioned into the new regiment as a captain in April 1807, was wounded at Wagram in 1809. Promoted squadron leader in February 1811, he commanded the extreme rearguard from Posen to the Elbe during the retreat from Russia. At Dresden in 1813, at the head of his squadron, he overran a Prussian battalion and took more than 1,000 prisoners. During Napoleon's exile on Elba, Jerzmanowski commanded the Polish cavalry volunteers who followed the former Emperor to his little Mediterranean kingdom. Returning to France in April 1815, Jerzmanowski was given command of the 1st (Polish) Sqn in Gen Colbert's Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard, and fought at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo that June.

divided into three parts: the Grand Duchy of Poznan (Posen), which was returned to Prussia; the free Republic of Krakow, which was placed under the joint protection of Russia, Prussia and Austria; and the Congress Kingdom of Poland, which was united with Russia by making the Tsar simultaneously its king.

1814–15: ELBA AND WATERLOO

On Elba, the former Emperor's Guard was composed of 607 Old Guard veterans from the Foot Grenadiers and Chasseurs, 100 gunners of the Old Guard Artillery, 7 Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard and 109 Polish Lancers. The cavalry, commanded by Sqn Ldr Jerzmanowski, were divided into a mounted company under Capt Schultz (who was an imposing figure, reputedly 7ft tall), and a dismounted company under Capt Balinski. Other officers of the Polish Lancers who followed Napoleon to Elba were 1st Lts Fintowski and Koch, and 2nd Lts Skowronski and Piotrowski. The NCOs were Sgt-Maj Raffaczynski, QM-Sgts Josef Poleski and Jan Michniewicz, and Sgts A.Piotrowski, L.Trzebiatowski, M.Bielicki, F.Mierzejewski, J.Faszczewski, S.Borowski, J.Zaremba and M.Schulz. The trumpeters were A.Ramones and P.Duvelte. The panel on page 44 shows the composition of the squadron.

Just under a year after his exile to Elba, Napoleon escaped and returned to France. Regiments and generals flocked to join his standard as he marched north for Paris, and he regained his throne without a shot fired. On 21 March 1815 he decreed the reconstitution of his Imperial Guard, and on 8 April he specified its reduced organization. (see page 44).

The combined regiment of Light Horse Lancers was to have a strength of 826 men and 869 horses. In Article 84 of the same decree the Emperor ordered that the companies returning with him from Elba would serve as the 1st Battalion or 1st Squadron in each regiment. The 1st Squadron of the Guard Light Horse Lancer Regiment was therefore entirely composed of Poles, while the other squadrons were formed by the former Red Lancers, who had returned to him from the service of King Louis XVIII. By 10 April the regiment had 53 officers and 621 men with 538 horses; by 1 June these figures had risen to 65 officers and 1,181 men, but only 739 horses; and by 10 June, when the Guard Cavalry set out on the advance to the Belgian border, 1,253 all ranks and 955 horses. However, the shortages of equipment meant that during the campaign it was able to mount only some 800 men.

The story of the Hundred Days campaign against Blücher's Prussian and Wellington's British–Netherlands–German armies, and the battles of Ligny, Quatre Bras and Waterloo (16–18 June 1815), is too well known to repeat here. In this brief campaign the Light Horse Lancers, commanded by Gen Colbert, served with the Guard Light Cavalry Brigade of Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes, alongside Col Lallemand's Mounted Chasseurs. On 15 June the regiment was serving under Marshal Ney in the left wing of the Army of the North. At Frasnes, Sqn Ldr Jerzmanowski's Polish squadron took casualties in a charge on a roadblock of Nassau infantry and guns. At Quatre Bras the next day the regiment were held in reserve, but still lost some 50 men, and

The Lancers on Elba, April 1814–15

Rank	*Men*	*Horses*	*Rank*	*Men*	*Horses*
Major (commander)	1	8	Quartermaster-sergeants	2	2
Captain	1	3	Corporals	8	8
1st Lieutenants	2	4	Trumpeters (French)	2	2
2nd Lieutenants	2	4	Farrier	1	1
Sergeant-Major	1	1	Troopers	81	81
Sergeants	8	8	*Totals*	*109*	*122*

Imperial Guard, 1815

Foot Grenadier Corps:
3 Old Guard Foot Grenadier Regiments
6 Young Guard Tirailleur Regiments
Foot Chasseurs Corps:
3 Old Guard Foot Chasseur Regiments
6 Young Guard Voltigeur Regiments
Cavalry:
1 Mounted Grenadier Regiment
1 Dragoon Regiment
1 Mounted Chasseur Regiment
1 Light Horse Lancer Regiment
1 Mounted Gendarmerie Regiment
Artillery:
6 Old Guard Foot Artillery Companies
4 Mounted Artillery Companies
1 Company of Workmen (*Compagnie d'Ouvriers*)
1 Train Squadron
Engineers:
1 Company of Sappers
1 Platoon of Miners (*Mineurs*)
Military Train:
1 Squadron

After nearly a year on Elba, Napoleon landed on the south coast of France and began to march north for Paris to reclaim his throne, accompanied at first only by the small Guard detachment which had volunteered to follow him into exile. The horses had to be left on Elba, and most of the troopers had to carry their equipment on their backs. (Drawing by Job)

Gen Colbert was wounded in the left arm. During the advance to Mont St Jean on the 17th the Light Horse Lancers, covering the right flank, were mistakenly fired upon by the 7th Hussars. They spent a miserable night in the rain, remaining under arms for hours before being able to seek what shelter they could find.

At Waterloo on the afternoon of the 18th the Guard Light Cavalry Brigade were drawn up in reserve west of the Brussels road, with the Guard Heavy Cavalry Brigade and Gen Kellermann's 3rd Cavalry Corps on their left, and Gen Milhaud's Cuirassiers on their right. During Marshal Ney's attacks on the British–Netherlands–German infantry squares the Light Horse Lancers were led by Gen Colbert in at least three separate charges; they were unable to break through, and were counter-attacked by Allied light cavalry. They then returned to the French line rather further to the west, nearer to Hougoumont. The brigade was caught up in the confused southwards retreat of the Army of the North after nightfall.

When the roll was called near Laon on 23 June the Light Horse Lancers of the Guard listed 30 officers, 507 men and 504 horses present. Of these the Polish 1st Sqn had 2 officers, 60 men and 60 horses, with a further 10 men and 12 horses at the depot. The squadron listed 8 men and 16 horses as known killed, and 2 officers, 29 men and 19 horses as missing – these may have been dead, wounded or stragglers. The army was directed to Orleans; by mid August many troops had drifted away, but the Light Horse Lancers now had 37 officers with 51 horses, and 562 men with 610 horses. The Polish squadron left from Mirabeau for the long ride to Warsaw on 29 August; at that time their strength was 10 officers, 179 troopers and 196 horses. On 1 October 1815 they passed into the service of the Tsar.

PLATE COMMENTARIES

UNIFORMS

The Polish Light Horse Regiment of the Guard, later transformed into the 1st Light Horse Lancers of the Guard, wore uniforms of which the main colours were dark blue with crimson facings; trim and insignia were white or silver lace, white metal or silvered.

Czapska The square-topped Polish-style lancer cap had a black leather skull and peak, the latter bound with white metal; above a white or silver lace horizontal band the crimson cloth crown, braced with cardboard and cane, had a vertically fluted appearance. It was piped in white or silver across and around the square top and up the four vertical edges. A large 'sunray' frontal plate in yellow metal had a white metal tombstone-shaped centre bearing a yellow metal crowned 'N'. White metal chin chains were secured between two large lion-mask bosses, or hooked up to the right corner of the crown. A tricolour cockade was worn on the left front of the crown (white, around red, with a blue centre), adorned with a large white metal Maltese Cross.

For full dress the cap was furnished with a tall white feather plume and white thread cords falling to tasselled 'flounders'. The only alteration during its existence was a slight reduction in height, from 22 to 20cm (8.6 to 7.8 inches). On campaign the *czapska* was usually protected by a cover made of black leather or waxed or oiled cotton, which left only the chin chain and peak visible.

Kurtka The tight-fitting, waist-length, plastron-fronted Polish-style jacket in dark blue had short tails, with a crimson standing collar cutaway at the front, small crimson turnbacks, pointed crimson cuffs, and a total of 31 white metal buttons. The rear seams of the sleeves and body were piped crimson, as were false three-point pockets in the tails. The lapels fastened together with concealed hooks-and-eyes up the front; they could be worn either buttoned across to the right, showing blue, or buttoned open, showing crimson. The collar, cuffs, and the crimson side of the lapels were edged with 15mm silver lace for enlisted ranks; some reconstructions show the collar edging doubled for senior NCOs, but a portrait on page 19 does not. Officers' jackets bore three lines of silver enclosing a serpentine 'zigzag' pattern. The rank insignia of NCOs were worn *en pique* – as chevrons, point upwards, immediately above the cuffs.

Until 1809–10, when the regiment were fitted out as lancers, they wore a shoulder knot and elaborate plaited aiguillette in white cord, the knot with crimson backing, on the right shoulder, and a fringed epaulette in the same materials on the left. After that date these were transposed, so that the aiguillette would not interfere with the handling of the lance. Non-commissioned officers wore mixed silver-and-crimson cords and epaulette fringes, and officers wore silver cords and lace.

Trousers For full dress these were dark blue, very tight-fitting and extended over the spurred black ankle boots at the instep; the outseams were decorated with crimson piping between two crimson stripes. For campaign service wider-cut overalls were worn, in dark blue with black leather reinforcement to the inside legs and seat and around the bottoms. The sideseams could be opened or closed by 18 large buttons down a crimson stripe on each leg.

Waistcoat A dark blue, sleeveless vest could be worn, so short that it was not visible under the *kurtka*; it had a small, straight-cut collar and 18 small buttons.

Stable jacket The *gilet d'ecurie* was a sleeved, single-breasted, dark blue jacket, also cut short above the hips; it had a low standing collar and shoulder straps in blue, and up to 10 front buttons. In summer this was worn with loose-cut white stable trousers in heavy cotton drill (and often, as was common in that period, with wooden clogs).

Fatigue cap The *bonnet de police* had a crimson band or 'turban' trimmed at the top and open back edges with white lace, and a long, pointed, dark blue 'flame' with three lines of white piping and a white tassel at the point. The flame was habitually worn folded over and tucked down into the band, with the tassel protruding. The trim on the caps of NCOs was silver and the tassel crimson-and-silver.

Coat The voluminous *manteau-capote* sleeved riding coat was off-white with a deep shoulder cape and a high crimson collar; the cape and part of the coat were lined crimson. Before being transformed into a lancer unit the regiment wore a simpler, collared riding cloak in the same colours, without sleeves or cape.

Trumpeters

Until about 1810 their full dress was crimson with white facings and silver lace. From around that date this changed to white with crimson facings and silver lace. Campaign dress was sky-blue, like that of all Guard cavalry trumpeters, with crimson facings and silver lace. Trumpeters' plumes were red with a white top.

Equipment

At the time of their organization the troopers were armed with a sabre, two Prussian saddle pistols and a carbine with bayonet. From 1809 onwards they received the standard light cavalry sabre worn by the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard, Year XIII pistols and a Year IX carbine. When the 2.75m (9ft) lance was added, the weight of all this equipment on the horse was not the only problem – it was very awkward to handle the lance with a carbine bouncing against the trooper's right thigh. The lance was issued only to the front rank of the regiment from April 1813, as had originally been recommended in June 1811 by ColMaj Dautancourt.

All leather belts were white. The sword belt had two rings for the sabre slings, and a bayonet frog; the rectangular brass plate showed the Imperial eagle in relief. The white carbine belt and its black leather cartridge pouch were of Guard pattern; the carbine holder was made of white hide with brass fittings.

On 30 September 1811 the Emperor decreed that the hussar-style belt was to replace the one used by the Light Horse Lancers. This might explain the contemporary drawings by Van Lagendijk showing Red Lancers in around 1810–11 wearing the traditional hussar-style belt.

A1: Colonel Count Krasinski in full dress, c.1809–10

Colonel Krasinski is reconstructed here from photographs of his *czapska, kurtka* and sabre taken in Warsaw before World War II; sadly these relics are now lost. Note the foliate embroidery of senior rank on his cap and jacket, his heron-feather plume and the oriental style of his sabre.

A2: Mounted senior officer in parade dress
The silver and crimson sash was worn for the most formal parades, e.g. in the presence of the Emperor. The details of saddlery and harness varied according to the taste and wealth of the individual, but the double silver edging on the *shabraque* distinguished officers of field rank, from *chef d'escadron* upwards.

A3 & 4: Officers in full dress
The *czapska* of A3 is of Polish-made 'choked' shape, instead of the more straight-sided form worn by the other figures including A4; this *étranglée* shape, seen more clearly in Plate F3, was characteristically Polish in style, and probably lighter. The officers' zigzag silver lace, embroidered round the edges of the collar, cuffs and lapels in a frame of three silver lines, was unique in the French Army. This officer wears the pair of thick-fringed epaulettes of field rank, the right one overlaying the aiguillette has the single, narrow-fringed left epaulette of a lieutenant. The wide sword belt with a rectangular plate, or the sash, were worn according to daily orders; A4 wears the latter, over a narrow hussar-style sword belt. The rear view shows the pouch belt and pouch, of a design peculiar to officers of this regiment. Crimson trousers, intended for use with the white, crimson-faced special parade *kurtka*, were also sometimes worn with this blue full dress jacket.

B1: Officer in everyday service dress
This order of dress closely resembles that of the enlisted ranks, and the officer wears belts of plain white leather rather than with silver lace facing.

B2: Officer in campaign dress
This *czapska* follows a fashionable style in that the cover is of very light oiled cotton, with a semi-transparent appearance. The *kurtka* with lapels blue on both sides was not a regulation garment and is an example of private purchase, worn on campaign instead of the usual crimson-faced lapels buttoned across *'à l'anglaise'* (the crimson showed wear and dirt easily). The trousers are reinforced with leather like the enlisted men's overalls. Note the buttoned campaign cover over the expensive pouch belt; and the embroidered purse-like tobacco pouch hanging from his right hand.

B3: Officer at Borodino, 1812
Reconstructed after an eyewitness drawing by Capt Tartarat, an ADC to Gen Baillet-Latour. The most striking details are the *colpack* or busby and the overalls. Note too that the drawing shows the aiguillette on the left shoulder; for officers this was the reverse of the usual position after 1809, and perhaps indicates a particular function – e.g. an adjutant. Given that the drawing was made from life we have preferred to keep this detail, rather than reversing it to the regulation position (as did Rousselot in his Plate 75, and Benigni in *Le Passepoil No.1*). We have, however, added an authentic if non-regulation sabre.

C: The uniform colour specified in the regulations was *'bleu turquin'*, which is sometimes translated as 'Turkish blue' but which does not have an exact meaning in modern French; the *'cramoisie'* or crimson of the facings is similarly inexact and is often reconstructed too dark by modern illustrators. We have chosen to follow contemporary sources for the outline of the uniform – e.g., for this plate the sketches by Albrecht Adam, showing the short cut of the jacket, and the ample seat of the trousers for ease of movement on horseback.

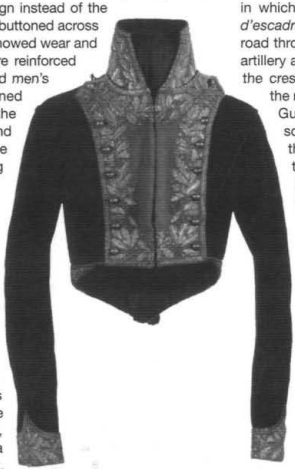
C1: Light Horse trooper in full dress, 1807–10
Note that the aiguillette was worn on the right shoulder for the first two or three years of the regiment's existence.

C2: Light Horse Lancer trooper in full dress, 1810–14
This rear view shows the cut and decoration of the clothing and the details of the equipment.

C3: Sergeant in full dress, 1809–10
Apart from their rank insignia, senior NCOs were also distinguished by better-cut uniforms. The *galon* of the *maréchal des logis* was worn as a chevron above the cuffs; the cap cords and the shoulder insignia were mixed, two-thirds silver and one-third crimson. The sabre was sometimes a personal choice; this sergeant has the An XII Light Cavalry model, its fist strap also in mixed silver and crimson.

D/E: THE POLISH LIGHT HORSE OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD AT SOMOSIERRA, 30 NOVEMBER 1808
As described in detail on pages 18–20, this was the action in which the 3rd Squadron of the regiment, led by *Chef d'escadron* Kozietulski, charged in column up the narrow road through the pass of Somosierra in the face of Spanish artillery and infantry, suffering terrible casualties but gaining the crest of the pass. They were followed by the rest of the regiment and also by the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard. The 3rd Sqn were the Emperor's duty squadron that day, and we have therefore shown them in full dress with crimson trousers – that is how they are represented in his painting by Baron Lejeune, who was present at the action. At right, Sqn Ldr Kozietulski **(1)** is seen immediately behind Gen Montbrun **(2)**.

F1: Trooper in campaign dress, 1809–10
The lapels are crossed to hide the crimson side. Note that the aiguillette has not yet been



Parade uniform of Gen Krasinski, whose rank from 1811 entitled him to wear his regimental uniform with silver-embroidered distinctions. This was a common practice during the Empire; other known examples include portraits of Gen Colbert and Gen Dubois showing them wearing the scarlet and blue *kurtka* of the 2nd Lancers of the Guard with additional gold foliate embroidery of general rank. (Warsaw Army Museum)

transferred to the left shoulder. The rear corners of the shabraque are hooked up to protect the expensive embroidered Imperial eagles. Nets carrying several days' forage for the horse had to be carried on campaign; the proper feeding of horses in harsh seasons or terrain was a constant problem, and contributed to the heavy losses among cavalry mounts.

F2: Trooper in coat-cloak

Issued protective garments are described above under 'Coat' and in the caption on page 40.

F3: Sergeant, Campaign of France, 1814

Composite reconstruction showing typical features of late campaign dress. The *czapska*, here with a black waxed cloth cover, shows more clearly than in Plate A3 the 'choked' shape typical of private purchase in Poland – we should remember that in this regiment even the troopers had to be members of the landed gentry, and to pay for their own uniforms. These overalls resemble those of figure B3 – the so-called *'pantalons à Lasalle'*, named after that general.

F4: Trooper, campaign dress, 1808–09

The trooper wears the regimental *bonnet de police*, and – being dismounted – carries his valise slung from a cord. Both this and the previous figure show the rolled cloak worn around the body to give protection from sabre-cuts; and the fist strap of both sabres had been replaced by a large twisted kerchief – less expensive and more efficient than the regulation item – as recommended by General Brack in his book *Light Cavalry Outposts*. The leather booting on the overalls is deep at the ankles, as shown in certain works by Vernet.

G1: Kettledrummer in special parade dress, 1810–12

By tradition mounted kettledrummers were recruited from among the trumpeters and had to be – or able to pass for – very young men. That of the Light Horse Lancers, Louis Robiquet, was born in 1787, so was 23 in 1810, and was only 5ft 3ins tall. All the items of his extraordinary Polish-style costume survived in Warsaw until World War II – in an admirable state of preservation, according to Lucien Rousselot. The velvet ground of the drum cloths was scattered with stars in silver thread (omitted from Martinet's reconstruction). The drummer and his mount were not seen in their fantastic finery except on very rare state occasions such as the Emperor's birthday parade.

G2: Trumpeter in full dress, 1807–10

The original crimson *kurtka* faced with white. The trumpet was silvered, a rare feature in the French Army.

G3: Trumpeter in full dress, 1810–14

The richly embroidered trumpet-banner was only attached for important parades – note the cap cords, aiguillette and trumpet cord of white mixed with crimson. Note too the belts, faced with three silver lace stripes and edged with crimson.

H1: Trooper, 3rd (Polish) Regiment of Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard, July–October 1812

This soldier of the ephemeral unit raised after the Grande Armée occupied Lithuania during its march into Russia is reconstructed after a watercolour by Hoechle. The uniform is improvised, and although in Guard colours it includes features which are clearly Polish Line issue: the white-trimmed *czapska* probably has a leather top, and the *kurtka*, worn over a waistcoat, is also of characteristically Polish cut.

For parades or other ceremonial occasions the trumpets were furnished with banners. These were white and crimson, with silver embroidery apart from the gold-embroidered crowned 'N' and eagle.

H2: Trumpeter in campaign dress, 1807–10

The cap has a cover of black waxed cloth, and the jacket is worn with the lapels buttoned across to protect the white-faced side. The overalls are the standard type worn by the rank-and-file.

H3: Trumpeter in campaign dress, 1810–14

The uniform is now of the 'dark sky-blue' worn by the *têtes de colonne* of all Guard cavalry regiments, faced crimson. The horse furniture was the same as that of other troopers.

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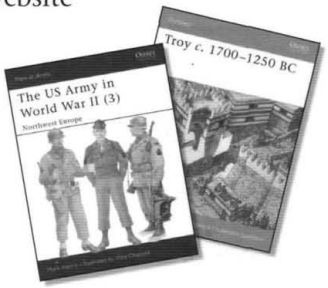

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